



**BIBLE
STORIES
FOR
YOUNG
PEOPLE**
BY
S. E. DAWES

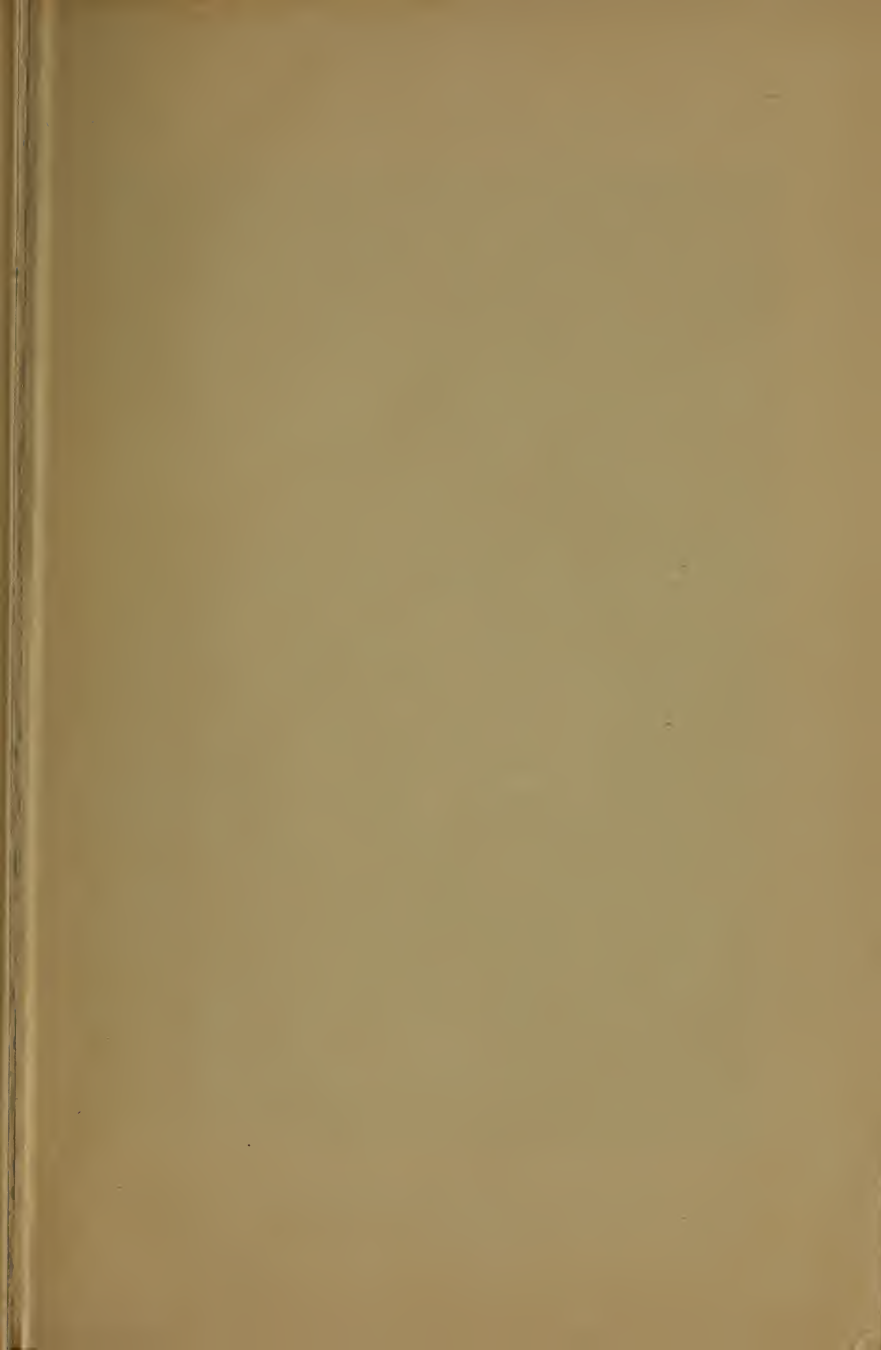


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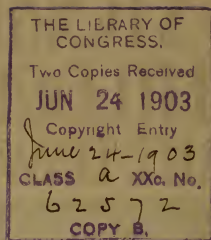
THE HOLY NIGHT.

From a painting by Müller.

BIBLE STORIES
for CHILDREN
by SARAH E. DAWES



N E W Y O R K
T H O M A S Y C R O W E L L & C O
P U B L I S H E R S



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PREFACE

IN preparing these Bible stories for young readers, it has been the aim of the author to give them as simply as possible, without note or comment. There has been no attempt at criticism and no explanation of events narrated other than the Bible gives. This has seemed the wisest course to pursue in writing for children these oldest of stories. They have the effect, however, of being ever new, and whether read or listened to by the young, often prove of absorbing interest.

It goes without saying, that no education ought to be considered complete without a knowledge of the incidents recorded and the characters described in this oldest of books. That such knowledge is lacking among the students of the present day has been proved to be a lamentable fact. If these stories shall

interest young readers and so fix their attention as to give them an intelligent knowledge of the scenes and characters of the Old Testament, and of the sublime teachings of Jesus and his apostles in the New, the work of the author will not have been in vain.

S. E. D.

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BIBLE STORIES

THE STORY OF THE FLOOD

THERE was once a great storm of rain that covered the earth with a flood; first the fields and valleys were covered, and then the high hills, and last of all the mountains.

All the nations who have lived since have some story of this flood. Even the savage tribes in far-away lands have their stories of how the earth was once covered with water.

There is an old Chaldean story about a man who once built a vessel in which he was saved from drowning; and in the vessel with him were many different animals and birds.

Another singular story is told of a battle between the sea and the earth. In this fight the sea wins the day, and the earth is covered by the water.

There is also a Phrygian story of a man named Enos who foresaw that there was to come a great rain; and it is said that he wept and prayed for his people, because of the terrible flood that was coming upon them.

A curious medal has been found that tells about this flood, and upon it is a picture of a square-shaped vessel. This is floating upon the water, and has the picture of a man and woman standing within it. There are two birds in the picture; one of them is perched on top of the vessel and the other is flying toward it, with a branch in his mouth.

From the Bible we have our story of the Flood, and it is one of the most interesting which we find in the sacred Book.

But before learning about that, we will see what the Bible tells us about the people who lived before the Flood came.

When God created Adam and Eve, who were our first parents, he gave them their home in a beautiful garden. There were all kinds of lovely flowers in bloom, and delicious fruits grew upon the trees. God told them they might eat the fruit of every tree in the garden but one, and that they were not to touch.

They obeyed God for a while, and lived a happy life in the garden; but one day while Eve was walking there a serpent spoke to her. He asked her if she could eat the fruit of every tree in the garden; and she told him no, she could not, for God had said they must not eat of the tree of life, neither must they touch it,

lest they die. Then the serpent told her not to mind what God had said to them, for they could eat the fruit of the tree if they wished, and it would do them no harm. Eve believed the serpent, and the fruit looked so tempting that she took some, and afterward gave some to Adam.

Both of them had disobeyed God, and now they were unhappy, and afraid to meet him as they used to in the old happy days. The Bible tells us that when they heard the voice of God in the garden they hid themselves.

God spoke to them, and asked them where they were, and, ashamed and guilty, they came out of their hiding-place.

When God asked Adam about his wrongdoing, he said that Eve was to blame, for it was she who gave him the fruit. And Eve said it was the serpent who tempted her to do wrong. Both wanted to lay the blame of their sin upon some one else, and it was a sad ending to their pleasant life in the garden, for God told them they could no longer have a home there. They must go out into the world and work for their living now, and instead of the garden yielding nothing but beautiful fruits and flowers, there would be thorns and thistles, and they would find that, because of their sin, everything would be different for them in the world.

So they went out of their garden home, and their hearts must have been full of sorrow.

By and by sons and daughters were born to them, and the names of their two sons were Cain and Abel. Cain was a farmer and worked in the fields, but Abel was a shepherd. One day each brought an offering to the Lord. Abel gave his in the right spirit, and it was accepted, but the Bible tells us that God had no respect unto Cain and his offering. So he went about with a sullen look upon his face, for his heart was full of hate against Abel.

Not long after as they were together in the field we are told that "Cain rose up against Abel his brother and slew him," and when God called out to him, "Where is Abel thy brother?" he said: "I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?"

But God had seen the wicked deed, and the earth was now stained with Abel's blood. Cain had taken the life of another, and that one his own brother, and God told him that because he had done this, he must always be a wanderer upon the earth. Every man would shun him, for he was a wicked murderer; so it is not any wonder that Cain cried out, "My punishment is greater than I can bear."

A mark was put upon him, and every one

knew that he was the man who had killed his brother.

All we hear of Cain after this was, that he went far away into the land of Nod, and there built a city.

After long years had passed away there came to be a great many people upon the earth, and they lived to be hundreds of years old. One man in those early days was so good that he was said to have "walked with God." This man's name was Enoch, and when he was three hundred and sixty-five years old God took him to heaven.

Most of the people, though, who lived at that time were so bad that God was sorry he had ever made them. He saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth. People did all sorts of dreadful things, and the earth was "filled with violence." The Bible says, "It repented the Lord that he had made man upon the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." And so the Lord said that he would "destroy man whom he had made," and with him he would destroy all the beasts, and the creeping things, and also the fowls.

But among all these wicked people there was one who with his family was good and true. This was Noah, who "found grace in the eyes

of the Lord." This man must be saved and kept alive, as he was the only good person left.

So God told Noah to build a great boat which should be called an ark. He told him to build it of gopher wood, and make it large, with a great many rooms in it. This gopher wood was obtained from the cypress tree, and it was so hard and strong that it would last a great many years. After the planks were put together, Noah was told to cover them with pitch both inside and outside. This would make the boat so tight that no water could get in. It was to be three stories high, and a window made in it to give light. Then a strong door was to be built in the side of the ark.

Noah could make no mistake in his work, for God told him just how large to make this great boat. As we measure distance now, it was to be five hundred and twenty-five feet long, about eighty-seven feet broad, and fifty-two feet high. This was larger than any great ship of war that sails the ocean to-day.

After giving Noah the plan of this ark, God told him what it was for. A dreadful thing was going to happen. God said, "Behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy the earth, . . . and everything that is in the earth shall die."

But God told Noah that he would save him, and his wife, his three sons, and their wives, eight persons in all; that all of them should come into this ark and no harm should come to them.

Noah believed all that God had told him, and began at once to build the ark. People must have wondered to see this great boat being put together; but when Noah told them why he was building it, and of the great rain that was coming, none of them believed it. No doubt they thought he was a silly old man to make himself all that trouble for nothing. It took him a long time, a hundred and twenty years, to finish it.

At length, when it was all done, Noah had another great work to do, for God had told him that he wanted some of every beast and bird and creeping thing to be kept alive. So Noah took seven of some kinds of animals, and two of other kinds, and the same of birds. These he caused to go into the ark, into the rooms he had made for them there.

Sometimes animals and birds of the air seem to know when there is a storm coming, or any great danger. Perhaps it was so at this time, and all these living creatures came of their own accord to find shelter in the ark. Indeed, God said to Noah, "two of every bird shall come

unto thee to keep them alive." And Noah took plenty of food for his own family and for all the animals and birds. It must have taken him a long time to gather all this, and store it safely for their use.

When everything was ready, God told Noah to enter the ark himself with all his family. Noah made haste to obey this command, and as soon as they were all safely there, the Lord shut him in. Noah was then a very old man, for he had already lived six hundred years.

It was seven days after the door of the ark was shut before it began to rain; and perhaps the wicked people were laughing at Noah all this time. They certainly did not believe any dreadful thing was going to happen to the earth. The sun was shining as bright as ever, and everything was going on just as it had been ever since they could remember. Why should they fear something that was never likely to happen? The Bible tells us that these foolish people went on eating and drinking, and having a merry time, even to the very day that Noah went into the ark.

At last the dreadful storm came. "The fountains of the great deep were broken up," and the "windows of heaven were opened." This terrible storm of rain came pouring from the sky

for forty days and forty nights, and we may be quite sure that the poor drowning people laughed no more at the great boat. They climbed first the little hills, and then the mountains, to escape the flood, and as they did so, they must have wished that they, too, might have a safe home in the ark.

As the waters gathered, the huge boat was lifted from the ground upon which it was built; and away it floated, with Noah and all the living creatures in it, over the great world of water; By and by the tops of the highest mountains were covered, and not a living creature could be seen anywhere, for all had been drowned in the flood.

The ark floated about over the water a hundred and fifty days. But God had not forgotten Noah. Now that the rain had ceased the water began, little by little, to grow less deep, and one day Noah found that the tops of the mountains were beginning to show. What a glad sight it must have been to them all! Then Noah opened the window of the ark, and sent forth a raven. The bird flew away, and must have found at last some place where it could stay, for it never came back to its old home. Noah afterward sent forth a dove, but she found no place for her feet, so the poor

little thing was glad to fly back again to her shelter in the ark. Noah could see from the window, that the water was getting less deep every day, so he waited seven days, and then sent out the dove again. How anxious they all were to see what would happen! Would they ever see the dove again? Oh, yes! for when evening came, the dove flew back to Noah with an olive-leaf in her mouth, and they all welcomed her with joy, for now they knew that the flood had gone, and trees were growing again.

What a wonderful change there had been in a week! There was a green carpet of grass again on the earth, and trees were waving in the gentle breeze, and flowers were springing up everywhere. The clouds had rolled away, the black clouds that had hung so long over the earth, and the blue sky was above, and the bright sun shining once more. It was a new and beautiful world, and the dove never left it to go back to the ark. They all missed the timid little creature, but were glad that she had found a better home.

Noah wanted to be sure that all was right, so he waited many weeks longer before taking off the covering of the ark. The earth appeared dry, but he waited still longer. The last time

he looked out, lo! the water had all gone, and the earth was dry again. How fair it was, so fresh and beautiful in the glad sunshine!

One day, not long after, God told Noah that he might leave the ark. He had lived there for many months, and now he would be glad to find another home. He had been shut in with animals, both wild and tame, and it must have seemed to him sometimes like a prison.

The new, fresh earth had become a fit place for man's home again. The beasts and the birds and all the creeping things could find new homes, too, and plenty of food would grow for them all.

While the waters were going away, the ark floated about among the mountain tops, and they must have looked like the islands that we see in the ocean to-day. At last the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat. These mountains are in the land of Armenia, but we can never know upon which one of them the ark rested. The people of that country have chosen one, and each language has a different name for it. They think it is the right one, and so they call it Noah's mountain. It was from this place, wherever it was, that Noah was told to leave the ark, with all his family.

How full of joy they must have been as they stepped out upon the earth again! If there

were any little children in the family, how they must have shouted with glee to find room enough to run and play in once more! The animals, too, shared their joy. They all knew how to express their happiness, and we may be sure that every living thing showed its gladness in some way.

Noah was so glad and grateful that he felt he must perform an act of worship to God, and so the first thing he did was to build an altar, and offer a sacrifice upon it. He knew it was his first duty to thank God, who had thus kindly cared for him. God was pleased with this act of Noah as he looked lovingly down upon the good people whom he had saved. And he gave Noah a gracious promise. He said that he would nevermore bring a flood upon the earth, but while the world stood there should always be "seed-time and harvest"; that there would be "cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night should not cease."

And God gave Noah a sign that he would always keep his promise. He told him that he would place a rainbow in the sky, and people would see this many-colored arch after there had been a storm of rain. Then they would know that God had remembered his promise, and that soon the storm would clear away, and the sun shine again as brightly as ever.



NOAH RECEIVES THE DOVE.
From a painting by Oppenheim.

At times in every country in the world the rainbow is seen in the cloud. Not a summer passes that this lovely arch, with its seven beautiful colors, is not seen somewhere in the sky. It is the sign of hope and love that God has graciously given his children.

The names of Noah's three sons were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. These men with their families went forth out of the ark to make themselves a home once more upon the earth. Their families grew so large that in time they spread over many lands. At first they all wanted to live near each other, and soon they became a very great people and all spoke one language. They settled at last upon a wide plain in the land of Shinar. This was a rich country in Asia, lying between two great rivers, and was afterwards known as Chaldea. The people all liked this place so much that they wanted always to make it their home. So they planned to build a strong tower, "that would reach up to heaven." By doing this they hoped to become famous, and get a great name on the earth.

There was plenty of material for making brick all about them, and they could use the slime that was so abundant for mortar. So they worked hard and began to build the tower they had planned. But one day a strange thing

happened. The people came together to begin their work, as on other days, but something was the matter. They soon found that each one was speaking a different language, and they could not understand each other at all. For this cause the building of the high tower had to be given up.

This was God's plan to scatter them abroad, for he wished people to live in all parts of the earth, and not herd together in one place.

The descendants of Shem, the eldest son of Noah, are supposed to have settled in Asia. The languages spoken there are called Semitic from his name. Japheth's descendants went at first to live on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. From there they spread over all the country which is now called Europe. Some of this family made their homes upon the many islands of the sea.

Ham was Noah's youngest son, and his people went to live in Africa, where the black races have their home. The African people are often spoken of as the sons of Ham. The country of Egypt, where Joseph lived, and where Pharaoh was king, is called the land of Ham.

Noah lived three hundred years after the flood. What wonderful things he must have seen in all that long time! His great grandson, Nimrod, is

spoken of in the Bible as a mighty hunter before the Lord. He became at length ruler over a kingdom in the very land of Shinar where they once began to build that lofty tower.

Noah planted a vineyard himself, and began to till the ground. It is said that one village only was ever known to be built on the sides of the mountain of Ararat, and this, some people think, was the spot where Noah planted his vineyard. If this be true, perhaps he may not have gone far away from the country where he left the ark.

He lived to be almost as old as Methusaleh, for the Bible tells us he was nine hundred and fifty years old when he died. He was a good man, and pleased God in his life, and we think of him as the one man in all the earth who, with his family, was saved from the Flood.

FAITHFUL ABRAHAM

IN Ur of the Chaldees, far away in the East, there once lived a man who at first was called Abram.

The people of this land were worshippers of the sun. They saw this fiery orb rise every morning in the east, and in its journey toward the west it always brought them light and heat. It not only made the earth beautiful with trees and flowers, but it caused their food to grow. These people knew of nothing so great and powerful as this blazing sun. So they came to worship it as their preserver, and, for aught they knew, as their creator.

By and by Abram took Sarah, his wife, and, with Terah and his nephew Lot, he went to live in Haran.

Abram, although brought up with these sun-worshippers, must have heard in some way of the true God. One day, while living with his kindred in Haran, he received a command which he knew was God's voice in his heart. It said, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy

kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land which I will show thee."

No doubt Abram was much astonished to hear this, and then the words that followed must have seemed to him almost too good to be true. The Bible tells us that God said to him, "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing. . . . In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Abram believed that it was indeed God's voice that had spoken to him. So without waiting to know the reason of this strange command and of these wondrous promises, he set about getting ready for his journey. He was told to go to the land of Canaan, a rich and beautiful country. The people who lived there were rude and warlike, and they worshipped idol gods. But Abram simply obeyed God, and, with his wife and his kinsman, Lot, went to this strange new home.

The Bible tells us that Abram was seventy-five years old when he took that journey. We should call him an old man in our days, but no doubt he seemed almost young then. People in Abram's time lived to be very old. Some of them saw many more than a hundred years. So at seventy-five he was hardly more than

middle-aged. He took with him his flocks and settled first in Shechem. There we are told that God appeared unto Abram again, and once more promised to give him all this goodly land. Abram wished to show his gratitude, and so built an altar upon which to offer a sacrifice. This was the way people worshipped God in those early days.

The next place to which he came was Bethel, and there again he built an altar. Afterward he journeyed to the south, and in every place he went he pitched his tent. The people in those eastern lands who dwelt outside of walled cities lived in tents. These were made mostly of skins, stretched upon poles set in the ground, and were easily moved from place to place.

Although the land of Canaan was usually fruitful, and bore large crops of food, there sometimes came a famine. For months no rain would fall, and the earth would become so parched and dry that nothing would grow. Not long after Abram made his home in Canaan, there was a grievous famine in the land. So Abram and his wife went down to Egypt, where there was plenty of food. This land has a wonderful river called the Nile. The water of this river overflows its banks once every year. For three months it covers the meadows with water.

Seed sown upon this water quickly springs up in the soft earth, and when the water dries away it bears a plentiful harvest.

Abram made his home in this land of plenty, until he heard there was no longer a lack of food in Canaan. Then he took his wife, and his kinsman Lot and his family, and went back there to live. They both had great possessions, and Abram was said to be a rich man. He had treasures of silver and gold, and was rich in flocks of sheep and goats, and in great herds of cattle.

On his journey from Egypt he went toward the south, and came to Bethel, the very place where he had once built an altar.

Lot was almost as rich in flocks and herds as his uncle Abram. They spread over a large part of the land, and it took a great quantity of food for all these animals. There soon began to be trouble and strife between the men who tended the flocks of Abram and Lot. There wasn't room enough for both, so they quarrelled with each other.

Abram was sorry to hear of this strife, and wanted to do all he possibly could to make peace. He told Lot that, as the land was not able to give food for both of their flocks, he would go away to some other place. Surely they ought

to live in peace, for they were of the same family. "Let there be no strife, I pray thee," said Abram, "between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen, for we be brethren."

Abram meant all these kind words, for he offered to give Lot his choice of all the country. After Lot was suited, Abram said he was willing to take whatever land was left.

So they agreed to separate, and Lot chose the rich lands in the valley of the Jordan. Abram was left in the land of Canaan, but Lot "pitched his tent toward Sodom." This was a sad choice, for Sodom was a very wicked city. After Lot had left him, Abram went to live in Hebron.

Lot had rather a hard time among the people of Sodom. Some fierce kings attacked the city, and seized him as a captive and carried off his goods. One of the men who escaped went and told Abram what had happened. As soon as Abram heard of this trouble, he armed three hundred and eighteen of his servants and hastened to rescue Lot. They were all trained men and Abram was a brave leader, so before long he overtook the enemy that had captured Lot, whom he rescued and brought back, with all his family and his goods. Abram was considered a great man after this, and the fierce

kings of the region were glad to go out and meet him and do him honor.

God assured him again that all this country should be his; that his children should dwell there, and it should be their land. In fact, God promised to make of Abram a great nation. He would grant him a long and useful life, for he was told, "Thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age."

God made a covenant with his servant Abram, and he trusted in it fully. He believed God's promise that he should be the father of many nations. Because of this great honor that was coming to him, God changed his name to Abraham. The meaning of this word was, "the father of many"; so, ever after, this good man was called Abraham. He wondered how these great promises could be his, for as yet no child had been given him.

One day while sitting in his tent door Abraham looked up and saw three men coming. He ran out to bid them welcome, and bowed down before them. He gave them a kind greeting and said to them, "Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree." They gladly accepted this offer to rest in the shade, and bathe, for their feet were soiled with the dust of travel.

People in that country wore low sandals bound upon their feet instead of shoes. So it was the proper thing as soon as guests arrived to offer them water for the washing of their feet.

When Abraham had served his guests in this way, he said, "I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts: after that ye shall pass on." Then he went quickly to the tent of Sarah, his wife, to tell her of the arrival of the strangers. He asked her to "make ready three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth." While Sarah was doing this, Abraham ran to the herd of cattle, and selected a calf which he thought would be tender and good. This he gave to one of his servants to prepare for cooking.

These three men who had come to him so unexpectedly were strangers, but he treated them as kindly as though they had been old friends. Abraham spread the feast, when it was ready, under the shade of the tree, and stood by his guests while they were eating.

Before the men went on their way, they told Abraham that in due time he should have a son of his own; that Sarah should become the happy mother of a living child. She had so longed for a son whom she might love and cherish. When she heard from her tent door

that at last she would have her wish, her heart was filled with joy. She could hardly believe the gracious words that Abraham would become a great and mighty nation, and that she would become the mother even of kings.

When the three guests rose up from the feast to go away, they went in the direction of Sodom. Abraham went a part of the way with them, and then he was told that God would destroy the city of Sodom and its wicked neighbor, Gomorrah. He was sad at heart as he saw the men depart on their way to Sodom where his nephew lived. But God was merciful and gracious ; perhaps he would hear his prayer for the wicked city.

So Abraham asked God, if fifty good people were found in Sodom, if he would spare it for their sake. When he was told that it would be spared for fifty's sake, he grew more bold in asking. At last he ventured to ask if God would spare the city, if only ten good people were found there. God assured him that he would spare Sodom for even that small number. But there were not even ten in all that great city who were fit to live. There were Lot and his family only who were servants of God. This great and good Being never deserts his people, for "none of them that trust in him

shall be desolate." So God sent two angels to warn Lot of what was coming. He invited his angel guests into his house, and gave them food, and asked them to stay with him all night. But the men of Sodom treated these guests of Lot very badly. They even tried to break into the house that they might do them harm. At length the angels smote them all with blindness, and they were obliged to go away without carrying out their wicked plans.

Then the angels told Lot that there was no time to lose; God would soon destroy the city. He must get all his family together, and fly from the place as soon as possible.

When Lot told his sons-in-law of what was to happen, they thought he was mocking them, and refused to believe him. Then the angels told Lot to hasten and take his wife and his two daughters, and fly for their lives. But they lingered so long before they were ready to start that at last the angels had to take them by the hand and hurry them away. As soon as they were outside of the city, the angels said to Lot: "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain. Escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." But Lot would rather not go to the mountain, so he asked if he might tarry in the little city of Zoar.

His wish was granted, and he entered the place just as the sun was rising. But Lot's wife was not with them. She had disobeyed the command not to look back, and she was turned into a pillar of salt.

One day there was great rejoicing in the tent of Abraham and Sarah. Their long-promised son had at last been given them, and their hearts were glad. We do not wonder that they gave him the name of Isaac, which means Laughter. How carefully they watched and tended the baby! When he was weaned a great feast was made, for nothing seemed too good for this son of their old age. Isaac grew up to be a fine young man and his father had great delight in him.

But one day Abraham's joy in his son was turned into great sorrow. God's voice, the voice which he always obeyed, he again heard. The voice called, "Abraham"; and he answered, "Behold, here am I." Then there came to him this strange command: "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering, upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." His only son Isaac, whom he so dearly loved, how could he offer him up as a sacrifice! It was the son that God promised he would give him, the son through

whom great blessings were to come to the world. What could it mean? These thoughts must have passed through Abraham's mind, but still he would obey God, even though he was told to slay his son.

So one morning he rose up early and saddled his ass, for he was to take a long journey. He took with him his son Isaac and two of his servants. He was to offer up a burnt offering, so they carried with them the wood with which to build the fire. They travelled three days before they came in sight of the place where God told Abraham to go. Here he left the ass with the servants, and went on with Isaac alone. The bundle of wood he was to use in the burnt offering he gave to Isaac to carry, while he took the fire and the knife. As they walked along together Isaac said to his father, "Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" This was a hard question to ask the poor father, but he replied cheerfully, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." So they walked along together until they came to the place of which God had told Abraham. There he built an altar, and after placing the wood upon it, he bound Isaac and laid him upon it. Abraham even grasped the knife, and stretched it forth to kill his son.

Just then a voice called to him out of heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" He answered as before, "Here am I." "Lay not thine hand upon the lad," said the voice, "neither do thou anything unto him. For now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me." How Abraham's heart must have leaped for joy as he heard these words!

But surely he ought to offer a sacrifice to God, now more than ever. Just then Abraham turned and saw a ram that had been caught in the thicket behind him. Truly, God had indeed provided a sacrifice, and Abraham offered this ram for a burnt offering instead of his son. The name of this place was called, from that time, "Jehovah-jireh," which means, "The Lord will provide." A great sorrow had been taken from Abraham's heart, and the father and son must have had a pleasant homeward journey.

Sarah was spared many years after this. When she died she had reached the age of a hundred and twenty-seven years. Abraham had come to the land a stranger, and so he had no burial-place for his family. It was the custom in those days to bury the dead in rocky tombs, in the natural caves of the country. Abraham liked the cave of Machpelah so much that he wished to buy it of the owners. The

children of Heth, to whom it belonged, told Abraham at first that he might have it free of charge. When Abraham objected to this, the person with whom he was dealing replied: "Nay, my lord, hear me: the field give I thee; in the presence of the sons of my people, give I it thee. Bury thy dead." But Abraham was too wise to accept so large a gift. He paid four hundred shekels of silver for the field containing the cave. With loving care he laid Sarah to rest there. She had been the wife of his youth, and they had lived many long years together. Now his heart was sad that he should see her face no more.

When Isaac had become a young man, Abraham, who was growing to be very old, wished to see him settled in life. If he was to be a blessing to the world and serve God faithfully, he must begin in the right way. It would be unwise for Isaac to take a wife from the heathen families about him. So Abraham called his eldest servant, the one to whom he trusted all his affairs. He made this servant swear that he would go to Abraham's kindred, and there find a wife for his son Isaac.

The servant started on his journey, taking with him two camels. These animals were probably laden with many precious things for the young

woman whom the servant hoped to find. At last he reached Mesopotamia, and found the city where Nahor, Abraham's relative, lived.

In that country the daughters of the people were in the habit of driving their father's flocks and giving them water from the well. Abraham's servant knew of this custom, so he led his camels to one of these wells. While waiting there he prayed that God would guide him, and he said: "O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master, Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the city come out to draw water. And let it come to pass that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels also; let this same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac."

The servant had hardly done speaking when Rebekah appeared with the flock of her father, Nahor. This fair young girl tripped down to the well, and there she met Abraham's servant. He ran toward her saying, "Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water from thy pitcher." As soon as she was asked to do this, she ran to the well and drew a pitcher of fresh water. She not only gave the stranger a drink, but said to

him, "I will draw water for thy camels also." These were the very words that the servant hoped she would say. Surely she must be the young woman for whom he was seeking. When she told him who her father was, he knew that he need look no farther for a wife for his master Isaac. Rebekah asked the servant to her father's house, and there he gave her many beautiful presents which his master had sent her.

Abraham's servant was given a glad welcome, and refreshing food was set before him. But he refused to eat any of it until he had told them his errand. He said he had been sent by his master Abraham to ask that Rebekah might return with him, and become the wife of Isaac. The father and mother of the maiden were well pleased with this plan, and they said to their guest, "Behold, Rebekah is before thee; take her and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the Lord hath spoken." After this they ate and drank, and, no doubt, had a merry time at the feast.

When morning came, the servant was in haste to return to his master. Her friends would have liked to keep Rebekah with them a few days longer, but at last they agreed to call her and let her decide which she would do. So when Rebekah answered their call, they

asked her, "Wilt thou go with this man?" And she said, "I will go."

The servant was glad to hear this, and they soon started upon their camels for their long journey. Isaac, of course, was anxious for their old and trusted servant to arrive. At last one evening, as he was taking a walk in the fields, he spied the camels coming. When Rebekah saw this young man in the distance, she got off from her camel. The custom of the country would not allow her to approach him with her face uncovered, so she hastily put on her veil. The servant told Isaac the story of his journey, and led him to the young woman whom he had brought. Isaac was so pleased with her that he led her directly into the tent of his mother, Sarah, and she became his wife.

Abraham lived to see his grandchildren grow up about him, and when he knew that he must die, he gave all that he possessed to his son Isaac. He died at the age of an hundred and seventy-five years, and was buried by the side of Sarah in the cave of Machpelah.

The Bible speaks of him as having "died in a good old age; an old man and full of years." He became indeed the father of a great nation, and was so faithful and true as to be called the "friend of God."

THE STORY OF JACOB AND ESAU

THE hearts of Isaac and Rebekah were made glad by the birth of two little sons. These twin brothers were very unlike each other. The skin of the elder was rough and hairy, and they named him Esau. But the skin of the other was smooth and fair, and he was given the name of Jacob. This word meant a supplanter, one who takes something from another unfairly. We shall see by and by how well this name fitted Jacob.

They grew up to be fine sturdy boys. The Bible tells us that Esau was a cunning hunter. He loved to roam over the fields and hunt game for the use of the family. Jacob cared more for the home life of the tent, and was his mother's favorite son. Isaac was fond of the venison that Esau brought so often from the hunt, and he seemed to love this roving son better than Jacob.

One day when these brothers had grown to be men, Jacob gathered some lentils from the field. These were a sort of pea, and from them

he made a dish of red pottage or soup. Presently Esau came in from the hunt feeling faint and hungry, and this pottage smelled so good that he eagerly asked Jacob to give him a portion. His scheming brother thought this a good time to get away Esau's birthright.

In the country where they lived, the eldest son had certain rights which belonged to him only. Esau was just a little older than his brother, and so owned what was called the birthright. Jacob wanted this so much that he was willing to do a very wrong thing in order to possess it. He told Esau that he might have the pottage he asked for if he would sell him his birthright for it. Esau was so hungry that he readily agreed to do this, and said, "Behold, I am at the point to die, and what profit shall the birthright do me?" So the bargain was made. Esau foolishly sold his birthright, and Jacob gave for it one meal only of bread and pottage. The Bible says of Esau, "He did eat and drink and rose up and went his way; thus Esau despised" — that is, thought little of — "his birthright."

Isaac said to his elder son one day, "Behold now I am old and know not the day of my death." Fathers were expected in those days to bestow some special blessing upon the eldest son before

their death. So Isaac told Esau to take his bow and arrow, and go out into the field, and bring home some venison. The old father liked the way in which his son prepared that meat, and he told him, if now he would make it nice and savory, he would give him the blessing. Esau went quickly out to hunt for the deer that was to furnish his father's favorite food.

Rebekah had overheard the words that had passed between Esau and his father. Although her elder son was dear to her, she loved Jacob the better. She wanted him to have his father's blessing instead of Esau. So she told Jacob to run out to the herd as quickly as he could, and bring her two young kids, and of these she would make savory meat for his father. The eyes of the old man were dim, and if the food tasted good he would believe it was the venison which he loved, and would give the blessing to Jacob.

But Jacob said to his mother: "Esau is a hairy man, and my skin is smooth. If my father should happen to put out his hand and feel of me, he would be sure I was not Esau, and knowing I had deceived him, would give me a curse instead of a blessing." But Rebekah, his mother, was so anxious that Jacob should receive the blessing, that she told him if he would

obey her in this thing, she would bear all the blame.

After she had cooked the food, and everything was ready, Rebekah brought some of Esau's garments, and made Jacob put them on. Then she put some of the kid's hair on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck, and told him to go in and carry his father the food.

When he entered the old man's presence, he called out, "My father!" His father answered him and said, "Here am I; who art thou, my son?" Jacob replied: "I am Esau, thy first-born. I have done according as thou badest me. Arise, I pray thee, and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me."

Isaac was surprised that Esau had been so successful in hunting the deer. He said to him, "How is it thou hast found it so quickly, my son?"

Jacob replied, "The Lord thy God brought it to me." How he must have trembled when his father then said, "Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not."

As Isaac passed his hands over his son's and found they were hairy, he seemed puzzled. "The voice," he said, "is Jacob's voice, but

the hands are the hands of Esau." Then at last the poor deceived old father, thinking everything was right, gave Jacob the blessing.

Isaac had hardly finished speaking, and Jacob had but just gone out, when Esau came in. He had returned from the hunt and had prepared his father's venison, and now said to him in almost the same words as Jacob, "Let my father arise and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me." In a startled voice Isaac cried out, "Who art thou?" Esau gave the same reply that Jacob did, "I am thy son, thy first-born, Esau." When he heard these words, the Bible tells us that Isaac trembled very exceedingly. He cried out: "Who? where is he that hath taken venison and brought it to me? and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him. Yea, and he shall be blessed."

When Esau heard this he cried out with an exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!"

Isaac sadly replied, "Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing." We cannot wonder that Esau in his great sorrow should exclaim, "Is he not rightly named Jacob?" That word meant, as we know, to take the place of another, to get something away unfairly!

“Twice he hath done this,” Esau said; “he took away my birthright and now he hath taken away my blessing.”

The son who felt he had been so wronged could not bear to lose all. He said to Isaac: “Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father!” Esau wept as he thus pleaded with his father.

Isaac did have a blessing for this son, and comforted his heart by telling him that he would not always have to serve his brother. But Esau couldn't forget how badly he had been treated by Jacob. His hate for him grew more bitter as time went on, and he planned in his heart sometime to kill him.

Rebekah was troubled at the ill-feeling between her sons, and when some one told her of what Esau meant to do, she was much alarmed. She sent for Jacob and told him what she had heard. Then she bade him to go as quickly as he could to his uncle Laban, who lived in Haran. He could stay there in safety for a short time, or until Esau's anger had passed away. Then she would send for him to return home.

Isaac gave Jacob a parting blessing when he went away. He told him not to take a wife from any of the heathen families around, but one from his own kindred.

So Jacob went away from his home in Beer-sheba, and travelled all day towards Haran. When the sun had gone down, he looked about for a good place in which to sleep. Having found a comfortable spot, he made himself a rude bed, with a stone only for a pillow, and laid him down to rest. While there he had a most beautiful and wonderful dream. He thought there was a ladder set up on the earth, which was so tall that it reached to heaven. And as he looked the angels of God seemed to be passing up and down upon the ladder. He dreamed that the Lord himself stood near by and spoke to him. The voice said, "I am the Lord God of Abraham, thy father, and the God of Isaac. The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed."

He gave Jacob many other precious promises, and said, "I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest."

When Jacob awoke and thought over his wonderful dream, he cried out, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." He was afraid and said, "How dreadful is this place; this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!"

The next morning, Jacob took the stone he had used for a pillow, and pouring oil upon it,

set it up as a kind of mark. He named the place Bethel, which means the House of God.

Then Jacob made a solemn promise. He said if God would be with him, and keep him on his journey; if he would give him bread to eat and clothes to wear, and bring him back to his father's house in peace, then the Lord should be his God. He also promised to give to the Lord a tenth part of all the wealth he gained. After this he went forward on his journey, and came at last to the country where his kindred lived.

Pretty soon he entered a field where there were three flocks of sheep. In the middle of the field there was a well of water, and the thirsty sheep were gathered about it. Soon the men who were tending them came and rolled a great stone away from the opening of the well, and watered the flocks. Jacob went up to these men, and said to them, "My brethren, whence be ye?"

When they replied that they were from Haran, he asked them if they knew a man by the name of Laban, who was the son of Nahor. "We know him," they said; and when Jacob asked if he was well, they answered, "He is well, and behold Rachel, his daughter, cometh with the sheep."

And so it happened that while he was talking

with the men Rachel appeared, leading her father's flocks. Jacob was pleased when he saw her, and so glad to meet one of his mother's kindred that he ran to the well and rolled away the stone for her.

It was not until Jacob had helped Rachel to water the flock that he told her who he was; that Rebekah, his mother, was her father's own sister.

This was indeed wonderful news, and Rachel ran as fast as she could to tell her father. When Laban heard that his sister's son had come, he hastened to greet him. It was the fashion of the country to do this in a very hearty manner. So Laban folded Jacob in his arms and kissed him, and then led him joyfully to his home.

"Surely," he said to his nephew, "thou art my bone and my flesh," and Laban gave him such a hearty welcome, that Jacob stayed a month at his home. In fact, he liked the place so well, and was so happy with his mother's kindred, that he decided to stay with his uncle a long time. He had grown very fond of his cousin Rachel, whom he first met by the well.

When Laban asked Jacob what wages he should give him if he stayed and helped in tending the flocks, he replied, "I will serve seven

years for Rachel thy youngest daughter." Laban agreed to this, and said to Jacob, "It is better that I give her to thee than to another man."

Because of his love for Rachel, the Bible tells us that Jacob's seven years of service seemed to him but a few days. When the time for the wedding came, Laban made a feast, and invited many guests to the marriage. But he deceived Jacob by giving him Leah his eldest daughter instead of Rachel.

Jacob did not find this out until after the marriage, for Leah was covered with the long, thick veil which brides in that country always wore, and no one could see her face. Jacob was disappointed and angry, and said to Laban: "What is this thou hast done unto me? Did not I serve thee seven years for Rachel? Wherefore hast thou beguiled me?"

Laban replied that never in their country must they allow the youngest daughter to be married first. So Jacob had to serve another seven years for Rachel, and he still lived with his father-in-law Laban.

Everything seemed to prosper with him while there. The flocks and herds grew in number, until there was hardly room enough in the country for all of them. Besides, Jacob had

a number of sons born to him, and in those days that was thought to be a great honor.

Laban was well pleased to have such a thrifty son-in-law live with him. But he wasn't willing to pay him as he ought for his services. We read in the Bible that the angel of God spoke to Jacob in a dream one night, and told him to leave that country and go back to his own land.

When Rachel and her sister were told this dream, they were both well pleased at the thought of leaving. They said: "Is there any portion or inheritance in our father's house? Are we not counted by him as strangers?"

So they told Jacob, "Whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do."

Not long after, Laban went off quite a distance to shear the sheep. Jacob thought this a good time to carry out his plan of starting away. So he packed up all his goods, and put his large family upon the backs of the camels. This was the only way in which they could perform the long journey to Jacob's old home. He gathered together all the sheep and cattle that had become his in Haran, and put them in the care of his servants. Then they all went away so secretly, that the whole party had gotten a long distance before Laban was told of their flight.

He was angry, of course, and started off with a large party to pursue the runaway family. It was seven days before they overtook them, and one night while they were on the way Laban had a dream in which he was warned not to do Jacob any harm.

When the two men met, Laban asked Jacob why he had stolen off in so secret a manner. If he had told of his intention, he said he might have been sent away "with mirth, and with songs, with tabret and with harp."

Jacob frankly told Laban that he left secretly because he was afraid of him. He had not been a kind and just father to him, and now he was going to take his family to his own father's house. They had a long talk together about their late troubles, and after a while they agreed that hereafter they would be friends. They set up a stone, as the custom then was, for a memorial between them. Laban called it Mizpah, for he said, "The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another." Then Laban took a kind leave of Jacob and his family, and even blessed them as he went away to his own land.

As Jacob pursued his journey he came near to the country of Edom, where his brother Esau lived. Jacob was afraid that this brother whom

he had wronged so many years ago might still hate him as bitterly as ever. He wanted to make a friend of him if possible, and be allowed to journey peaceably through his country. He sent messengers to tell Esau that he was coming. The messengers soon returned with this thrilling message, "We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee with four hundred men."

Jacob was filled with fear when he heard this. His brother had become a rich man, and was a prince in the land, and now he was coming to meet him with an army.

But Jacob had learned where to go when in trouble. He prayed to God earnestly that his brother might not be allowed to do him harm. Then he sent forward by his servants a great many cattle and sheep, besides a large number of camels. When these servants met Esau, they were to tell him that his servant Jacob had sent them to him for a present, and that he with his family was coming to meet him.

That night we are told in the Bible that Jacob wrestled with the angel of God until the morning, begging of him to grant a blessing. "I will not let thee go," he said to the angel, "except thou bless me."

Jacob's wish was granted, and because of this

power with God his name was changed to Israel, which means a soldier of God.

After the angel went away, as Jacob lifted up his eyes to the hill country, behold, Esau was coming with the four hundred men. He made haste to arrange his family for the meeting. Those who were strongest among them he placed first in the company. All the women and the children and any who were feeble he put behind.

Then Jacob himself went forward, and as he came near to Esau he bowed down before him seven times. How glad he must have been when this dreaded brother ran to meet him. Esau not only embraced him, but he fell on his neck and kissed him, and they both wept for joy.

Then as Esau saw Jacob's large family about him he asked, "Who are these with thee?" Jacob answered with a glad voice, "The children which God hath graciously given thy servant."

After these had come forward and humbly greeted him by bowing low before him, Esau asked, "What meanest thou by all this drove which I have met?" Jacob replied, "These are to find grace in the sight of my lord." Esau graciously said to him, "I have enough, my brother, keep that thou hast to thyself."

But Jacob was so pleased to meet his brother

and to find that his anger had passed away, that he urged him to take the present. He said to him, "God hath dealt graciously with me and I have enough," and so at last Esau accepted his brother's present.

They parted good friends, and while Esau went again to his home in Edom, Jacob journeyed toward his own land. It was still a long distance, and he made many stops by the way.

A sad thing happened as they came near to Bethlehem, for Rachel, whom Jacob loved so dearly, died and was buried there. The site of her tomb is now shown to travellers who visit that land. She left a little baby, the youngest of Jacob's twelve sons, and his father called his name Benjamin, which means, "son of my sorrow." At last the whole family reached Canaan, and settled in the home that Jacob had left so many years before.

The two brothers still continued friends, for we are told that when Isaac, their father, died, at the great age of a hundred and eighty years, "his sons Esau and Jacob buried him."

JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN

IN a pleasant home in the land of Canaan lived Jacob and his twelve sons. Their home was not at all like ours, for we live in houses whose walls are made of brick or wood, but their dwelling was a tent covered with cloth or the skins of animals.

Jacob was a kind father to all his twelve sons, but the Bible tells us that he loved Joseph more than the others, because he was the son of his old age. It may be, too, that he was more kind-hearted than the others, that he was more obedient to his father than the rest of the brothers, and in this way had won more of his affection. One day Jacob gave this son a certain kind of coat, which showed him to be a favorite.

Joseph's brothers had seen for a long time how much their father loved him, and they were full of envy, and thought about this until they began to hate him.

When Joseph appeared one day dressed in his bright new coat, they hated him more than

ever. They could not even speak to him kindly, but gave him only cross words.

About this time Joseph dreamed a very strange dream. He thought he was at work in the field with his eleven brothers, where they had been reaping and binding up the ripened grain into sheaves or bundles. As he looked, lo! his own sheaf stood tall and straight in the middle of the field, while all his brothers' sheaves stood around and bowed down before his sheaf.

Joseph wondered what the dream could mean, and thought he would tell it to his brothers. When they heard about their sheaves bowing down before his sheaf, they were more angry than ever, and they said, "Shalt thou indeed reign over us?" It seems they were afraid that this might be what the dream meant.

Then Joseph had another dream that was quite as strange as the first one. He thought that the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed to him as the sheaves of wheat had done. He told this dream to his father, as well as to his brothers. Perhaps his father thought he was growing vain and proud, and was trying to set himself above them all, and he spoke quite sharply to Joseph, and said to him: "What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I

and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?" This dream of Joseph's was truly a strange one, and his father wondered what it could mean.

Jacob had a great many flocks of sheep and large herds of cattle, and was a very rich man in those days. These flocks had to go a long distance sometimes to get their food. Not long after Joseph told his dream the elder sons of Jacob went to Shechem to look after their flocks. By and by their old father wished to hear how they were getting along. He wanted to know if they were well, and if the sheep were doing all right. So when he called Joseph to go to see about them, he answered readily, "Here am I." Although it was a long and lonely journey, he was willing to please his old father by going.

But when he came to Shechem, he could see nothing of his brothers. As he was walking about the fields trying to find them, he met a man who asked, "What seekest thou?" And Joseph said, "I seek my brethren; tell me, I pray, where they feed their flocks." The man told him his brothers must have gone away somewhere, for he had heard one of them say, "Let us go to Dothan." So Joseph went to Dothan, and when, a long way off, his brothers

saw him, they said one to another, "Behold, this dreamer cometh." Then these wicked brothers began to plan together how they might take Joseph's life. They thought they would kill him, and throw him into a pit, and then say some wild beast had eaten him. Reuben, the oldest of these brothers, heard this plan, and said to them: "Let us not kill him. Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him." Reuben thought if his brothers did this, he could sometime take Joseph out of the pit without letting the rest of them know.

Pretty soon Joseph came to the place where his brothers were. He was glad to see them, and spoke pleasantly to them. But their hearts were full of hate, and they treated him roughly. They tore off the coat which his father had given him, and threw him into an empty pit. Then these cruel men sat down a little way off, and began to eat and drink, giving no heed to Joseph's cries as he was struggling in that deep pit.

After a while the brothers looked up and saw some merchants coming upon camels, who were going down into Egypt to sell their goods. So Judah, one of the older brothers, said, "Come, let us sell him to these merchants." They were

all quite willing to do this, so they sold Joseph for twenty pieces of silver. He was lifted out of the pit by the merchants, and carried far away into Egypt.

By and by Reuben came to the pit, meaning to take his brother out, and when he found that Joseph was not there he was filled with sorrow. Reuben thought surely he was killed, for he said to his brothers, "The child is not, and I, whither shall I go?" He was not present when Joseph was sold as a slave, and his wicked brothers kept it a secret. As they must soon return to their father, some story would have to be told him about the loss of Joseph. So they killed one of the kids of the flock, and, dipping his coat in the blood, they carried it home. When they brought it to their father, they said to him: "This we have found. Know now whether it be thy son's coat or not." Yes, it was indeed Joseph's coat; his poor old father knew it at once, and he cried out in his grief: "It is my son's coat. An evil beast hath devoured him. Joseph is, without doubt, rent in pieces." And the old man put on sackcloth, and mourned for his son many days.

When the merchants who had bought Joseph reached Egypt, they sold him to Potiphar, who was one of King Pharaoh's officers. Joseph,

although a slave, always tried to do right and serve his master so well that no fault could be found with him; and Potiphar trusted Joseph more and more as time went on. At last he made him an overseer, and gave everything that he owned into his care.

One day Potiphar's wife, who was displeased with him, told a false story about him to her husband. Potiphar believed his wife and was very angry with Joseph, and without waiting to find out the truth about the charge made against him, his master put him in prison.

In this place were kept other prisoners of the king. Joseph still tried to do right, and he soon gained the good-will of the keeper of the prison, who began to trust him just as Potiphar had done. It was not long before he gave him the care of all the prisoners, and this indeed was a great honor for a young Hebrew slave to win.

King Pharaoh had many officers in his court to wait upon him, and among these were the chief butler and the chief baker. The chief butler was the one who poured the wine into Pharaoh's cup and gave it to him. The chief baker made all the sweetmeats and nice things for the king's table. One day both of the officers did something to displease the king, and he put them into the same prison where Joseph was

kept. Joseph treated the new prisoners kindly, for he felt sorry for their trouble. One morning, they seemed so sad, that he said to them, "Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day?"

They told him they had each dreamed a dream, and they wanted very much to know what their dreams meant, and there was no one to tell them.

Joseph replied that God, who knew all things, could show them what the dreams meant. So when each of the men told Joseph his dream, he was able to show its meaning. It came to pass just as Joseph said: in three days the chief baker was hung by Pharaoh, but the chief butler was given his place again as the king's cup-bearer. Joseph begged of the chief butler to speak a good word for him when he was once more in favor with Pharaoh. For, he said, "I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews; and here I have done nothing that they should put me in the dungeon."

But although Joseph had been so kind to the chief butler, he forgot all about him for two long years, and then it happened that Pharaoh too dreamed a very strange dream. There were wise men in Egypt who pretended they could read the stars, and always tell the meaning of dreams, so Pharaoh called upon them to tell

him what his dream meant, but none of them could understand it, or reveal its meaning. It was then that the chief butler thought of Joseph.

When Pharaoh heard of this young Hebrew who was so wise, he sent for him, and they brought him in great haste out of the dungeon ; and when they had dressed him in proper clothing, they brought him before the king.

Pharaoh said to him, "I have heard say of thee that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it." Joseph never wished to take any praise that did not belong to him, so he replied at once, "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." This was the king's dream which he told to Joseph: he thought he stood upon the bank of the river, and as he looked, seven fat cattle came up out of the river and went to feeding in the meadow. After that seven lean cattle came and ate up the seven fat cattle. Then Pharaoh dreamed again that he was in a wheat field where seven good, full ears of wheat grew upon one stalk and then there sprang up after them seven ears that were withered, and these ate up the seven good ears.

Joseph told Pharaoh that the two dreams were as one, that is, they both meant the same thing. He said, "God hath shown Pharaoh what he is about to do." Then he told the

king that the seven fat cattle and the seven good ears of wheat meant seven years of plenty. That in these years there would be a large quantity of food grown everywhere in Egypt. The seven lean cattle and the seven bad ears of wheat meant that for seven years after no food at all would grow. This lack of food was called a famine, and Joseph told the king it would be a very grievous one. He also said to Pharaoh that he ought to choose some wise man to care for the extra food in the years of plenty. It should be kept in some safe place so that the people of Egypt might have food when the famine came.

Pharaoh was so pleased with what Joseph said about his dreams, and with his good advice, that he said to him: "God hath showed thee all this. There is none so discreet and wise as thou art," and he felt that he was the one to take care of the food. So he said, "I have set thee over all the land of Egypt." Pharaoh not only said these gracious words, but he took the ring off his own finger, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and caused him to be dressed in the finest clothes, and put a chain of gold about his neck. And then, to honor the new governor still more, the king made Joseph to ride in his second chariot. Men went before it, telling

the people whom they met to "Bow the knee." This was the custom in those days when any great man rode through the streets on horseback or in a chariot.

Joseph must have been filled with wonder at this change in his life, for he went as we have seen straight from a prison to live in a palace. There was no one in all the land greater than he, except King Pharaoh. Joseph was not proud when all this honor was shown him, as some would have been. He knew it was because of God's love and care for him and his family, that this great good had come to him. God had work for him to do in Egypt, and he set immediately to doing it.

The years of plenty had come, and there was ever so much more food than the people could use. This Joseph carefully put away until the stores were so large that he ceased to count them.

But after seven years, the famine came just as Joseph had said, and for a while the people ate the food which they themselves had saved. When that was gone they went to Joseph and bought the wheat which he had stored up. Then Pharaoh and all his people saw what a wise thing it had been to save food for a time of need.

This famine was in other countries besides Egypt, and by and by Jacob and his family began to want food. After a while they heard about there being grain in Egypt, which could be bought of the man whom Pharaoh had made governor. So Jacob said to his sons, "Get you down thither and buy us from thence, that we may live and not die."

There were eleven sons of Jacob at home, but only ten of them went down into Egypt. Jacob felt that he could not spare Benjamin, the youngest of them. A very dreadful thing had happened to Joseph, as he thought, so he was afraid to have Benjamin go out of his sight.

When Joseph's brothers came before the governor, they bowed themselves down before him. They hadn't the least idea who he was, but he knew them in a moment. Perhaps he thought of his dream then, when all his brothers' sheaves bowed down before his sheaf.

Joseph made believe, though, that they were strangers, and spoke roughly to his brothers. He told them they were spies, and had come there for an evil purpose. They felt very bad when they heard this, and said: "Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come. We are all one man's sons. We are true men; thy servants are no spies." But Joseph pretended not

to believe them. Then his brothers told him that once there were twelve brothers of them. The youngest was at home with his father, but the other, they said, "is not." They meant by this that they thought him dead.

When Joseph heard of this younger brother, he told them to go home and bring him down to Egypt. If they would do this, he should know that they were true men and not spies. And for three days Joseph put them in prison, where they could think over his plan. The third day he told them that if one of the brothers would stay behind, the others might go home with grain for their father. But they should not go, he said, unless they would promise to bring Benjamin back with them. This was sad news for the brothers, but it was the governor's order and they must obey him.

This hard thing, which he asked them to do, made them think how cruel they once were to Joseph. They began talking to each other about their wrong-doing, and to say that when Joseph pleaded with them for his life they refused to hear him. It must be because of their cruelty to him that this trouble had come to them. Reuben reminded them that he had wanted to save Joseph, but the rest were not willing. This trouble had indeed come because of their sin.

Joseph heard all this conversation, and could understand every word, for they spoke in his own language. The brothers thought that such a thing could not be possible, for the governor spoke to them in the language of Egypt, and a man had to tell them what he said.

At last they started on their journey home. Joseph had caused all their sacks to be filled with wheat, and he gave them food for their own use on the way. By and by they stopped at an inn, and one of the brothers opened his sack there to give his ass some food. What was his wonder to find the money which he had paid for the wheat safely stowed away in the sack. When he told his brothers about it they were all afraid. What could the governor mean by this?

Of course their father must know what had happened, so when they got home they told him all about their journey, and how the lord of Egypt spoke roughly to them and took them for spies. "We cannot go again," they said, "to buy food, unless we take our brother Benjamin. The man said if we brought him with us, he would believe we were true men." The poor old father was filled with grief when he heard that. "My son shall not go down with you," he cried. "If mischief befall him, then shall ye

bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave."

But after a while, the food which his sons brought from Egypt was all gone, and then Jacob said, "Go again and buy us a little food." But Judah told his father it would be of no use for them to go without Benjamin, for the lord of Egypt had said to them, "Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you." So the poor father said at last that Benjamin might go.

He wanted to please this great man of whom they were all afraid. So he sent him a present of honey and spices, nuts and almonds, and many other nice things. And besides this present he told his sons to take twice as much money in their sacks as they had done before.

When Joseph found that his brothers had come again to Egypt he met them with pleasant words. "Is your father well?" he asked; "the old man of whom ye spake. Is he yet alive?" Then they bowed very low before Joseph, and answered, "Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive." When Joseph looked at the group of brothers, and saw Benjamin among them, he wanted to weep for joy. But no one must see him do this, so he went away by himself for a while. When he felt as though he could speak to them, he came back and had

food served to them all. He loved Benjamin so dearly that he gave him five times as much as the rest.

The next morning Joseph sent his brothers away with their sacks full of wheat, but before they had gone far Joseph's steward came hurrying after them. He brought the startling news that the governor had missed his silver cup, and that he had sent him to see if they had not stolen it.

The brothers told the man that none of them would do such a wicked thing; and he might look in all their sacks and see for himself. So the man began a search through them all, and at last, when he came to look in Benjamin's sack, there he found the silver cup. Then they were all full of grief, as they went back to meet the governor. He asked them how they could do so unkind a thing as to take his silver cup, and he said that whoever had done the wrong must be his slave. The rest of the brothers might go home to their father.

Then Judah told the governor how much their father loved Benjamin. "The lad," he said, "cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die." Then Judah begged of Joseph to take him for a slave instead of Benjamin.

Joseph, as we know, had put the silver cup into Benjamin's sack to try them. He found that his brothers had indeed changed since the time when they had treated him so cruelly. Now they had grown kind-hearted and tender toward their father, and Judah was even willing, in order to save his young brother from being a slave, to become one himself.

Then Joseph could keep his secret no longer, and he made every person leave the house except his brothers. "I am Joseph," he cried; "doth my father yet live?" The brothers were speechless with wonder, and they looked so troubled that Joseph said kindly, "Come near to me, I pray you." When they did so, he said again, "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt," and he kindly told them not to grieve for what they had done, for God had sent him before them to store up the grain of Egypt, and thus save their lives.

And now, he said, they must hasten home, and bring their father and all their flocks and herds, for there would be no wheat grown in Canaan for a long time yet. And they must all come down to Egypt and live with him. "And ye shall tell my father," he said, "of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen."

Then Joseph wept for joy again upon Benja-

min's neck, and kissed all his brothers. He wanted them to know that he had freely forgiven them for all their bad treatment of him. After this the brothers were glad and happy, and could talk with Joseph without being afraid.

King Pharaoh was pleased that the governor, whom he thought so much of, had found his brothers. He knew of his wish that they might all come and live where they would have no lack of food. So Pharaoh bade the governor send wagons full of provisions for the journey of his father.

Joseph gave to each of his brothers a present of fine clothing ; but to Benjamin he gave more changes of clothing than to the rest, and three hundred pieces of silver.

The brothers at length reached home, and told their wonderful story. Jacob at first could not believe them, for the tale seemed too good to be true. But when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent, and had heard over again his kind words, he began to believe the good news. "It is enough," he said, "I will go and see him before I die."

Jacob's family started on their journey, with a long train of wagons and all their flocks and herds, and when they reached Goshen, Joseph made ready his chariot and went out to meet

them. He was so glad to see his old father that he wept tears of joy upon his neck, and Jacob felt that he was willing to die, now that he had seen the face of his long-lost son.

When Pharaoh heard that Jacob had come, he wished to see him. Joseph was proud to present not only his father, but five of his brothers, to the king. Pharaoh spoke to them kindly, and seemed pleased with the aged man who stood before him. Jacob answered with pleasant words, and gave the king an old man's blessing. Pharaoh told Joseph that his people might live in Goshen, as this was the best part of the land of Egypt. The king was very kind to give such a pleasant home to the strangers. There Jacob and his sons settled with their flocks and herds, and the family were all together once more. Jacob had found his son Joseph, whom he supposed was dead, and he was not only alive, but a great man in Egypt, and full of riches and honor.

Benjamin was still with his father, and there was no want of food. The twelve brothers seemed to be loving and kind to each other now, and this of course filled their father's heart with joy. And with Joseph to care for them so tenderly, they were all contented and happy in Egypt for many years.

THE STORY OF MOSES

IN the land of Egypt, where Joseph was once a governor and where his family went to live, there came a time of sorrow, and among the people of Israel were many sad-hearted fathers and mothers.

When Jacob and his family first came to Egypt they were few in numbers, but now there were many thousands of them. Another King Pharaoh had arisen, "who knew not Joseph," and who cared for none of his people. In fact, they had now become so numerous that he feared they would soon outnumber his own people. As this would never do, he made a law that hereafter any male children born in Hebrew families should be killed, for he would allow no more men of Israel to grow up. It was a rigid law of the king that every son born among these people should be cast into the river, but the daughters, he said, "ye shall save alive."

In one family there a little son was born, who his mother saw was such a "goodly child" that she kept his birth a secret and hid him

away for three months. As the child grew larger and stronger every day, his mother soon found that she could hide him no longer. So leaving the babe to the care of his sister Miriam, she gathered tall rushes that grew by the river Nile, and these she wove into a basket. Upon the outside of this she daubed pitch to make it water tight, and then tucking the child into his little basket bed, she carried it down to the river, and set it among the rushes.

The mother told Miriam to keep watch somewhere near and see what would become of her little brother. It was not long before King Pharaoh's daughter came down to the river with her maidens to bathe. Soon she noticed a strange-looking object out there among the rushes, and she wondered what it could be. She sent one of her maidens to bring it to her, that she might see for herself what it was. On lifting the cover, a beautiful babe, a sweet-faced little boy, looked up in her face and cried.

The princess knew of the cruel law which her father had made in regard to the children of his slaves. And as she looked at this babe she said, "It must be one of the Hebrew children." Her heart was full of pity for the little waif she had rescued from the water, and she resolved to make him her own.

Miriam had been anxiously watching all this time, and when she saw the loving look which the princess gave to her brother, she hurried to her side.

“Shall I go and call a nurse of the Hebrew women,” she asked, “that she may nurse the child for thee?”

“Go,” the princess replied, and away sped Miriam to find her mother. The poor woman had been very anxious about her babe, and now she could hardly believe her daughter’s story. With a glad heart she went with Miriam to see the princess, and the royal lady was so well pleased with this Hebrew woman that she said, “Take this child away and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages.”

Surely a wonderful thing had happened, for the child’s own mother was hired to take care of him. There was no danger now of his being killed, for the king’s daughter would see that no harm came to the babe she had so strangely found by the river. He grew finely with his fond mother to watch over and care for him; and we know that she taught him about the true God, who made the world and placed in it all the beautiful things he saw.

When the child was old enough to leave his mother the princess took him to her palace and

made him her son. She gave him the name of Moses, which means "drawn out," and it was an appropriate name for the child who was drawn from the water.

The people of Egypt at that time were wiser than the nations about them. They knew how to build magnificent temples and lofty pyramids for their burial-places. They made paper from the papyrus or rushes that grew by the Nile, and on this they wrote their strange figures of animals, birds, and plants. This pictured writing was often carved upon tall pillars of stone, and told of brave deeds done by some Egyptian king. One of these pillars was brought from the banks of the Nile, and now stands in Central Park, New York. Another was taken to London and set up there. People can see upon them both the picture writing which was carved upon them in Egypt thousands of years ago. Wise men studied this pictured writing a long time, and at last they learned what the pictures meant, and could read the writing quite well. Moses probably knew all about it, for the princess no doubt sent him to the best teachers in the country. The Bible tells us "he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," and when a boy he must have studied hard to have become so wise when he grew up.

Moses never forgot who he was, for he knew he was not the real son of the princess. He remembered his own mother well, and the stories she used to tell him about his own people. King Pharaoh still treated them as slaves, and as Moses went about among them his heart ached to see how hard they had to work.

One day he saw an Egyptian cruelly beating a Hebrew slave, and he rushed upon him and struck him a sharp blow, and the Egyptian never breathed again. Perhaps Moses did not mean to kill the man, only to punish him for his cruelty. When he saw what he had done, he buried the man in the sand and went away. He thought no one had seen him do this, but he soon found that this deed of his was known among his own people. What if King Pharaoh should find it out? Not even his being the adopted son of the princess could save his life then, and so he left his palace home in Egypt and fled to the land of Midian. It was a long journey there, and he sat down to rest him beside a well. A man by the name of Jethro lived not far away, and his daughters used to come every day to the well to water their father's sheep. It took a long time to do this, for Jethro had many sheep in his flock, and

sometimes other shepherds came and drove his sheep away. They were selfish, no doubt, and wanted their own sheep to get the water first.

Moses kindly drew the water for the shepherd maids and helped them in their work. Their father was surprised to see them coming home so early, and asked them how it happened. They told him an Egyptian who sat by the well had helped them, so he bade them go and call him. Jethro received Moses kindly, and asked him to eat bread with him. He was so happy and contented there, that he remained in Jethro's home a long time, and after a while Moses married one of his daughters and made a home for himself in this land of Midian.

All this while the people of Israel were in great trouble in Egypt, for King Pharaoh had become very bitter against them and treated them more harshly every day. God is always mindful of his earthly children, and when he saw how cruelly these Hebrews were treated, his heart was moved with pity for them. Some one must be sent to help them, and take them away from Egypt, and from the cruel Pharaoh who ruled them. Who so fit to do this thing as Moses, who was himself a Hebrew and knew all about the land of Egypt?

One day when Moses was out in a desert

place taking care of some sheep, a strange thing happened. A bush near him caught fire, and as he watched the flames, they did not burn the bush at all. This was indeed a wonder, for he had never seen, until now, any fire that would not burn. Presently a voice called from the bush, "Moses, Moses," and he said, "Here am I."

Then the voice spoke again, and told him not to come any nearer. "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet," it said, "for the place where thou standest is holy ground." Moses was filled with wonder. Whose voice could this be? The next words that came from the bush told him what he so much wished to know. It said, "I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." These were three good men of whom Moses had heard his mother tell, when he was a little boy. This great and holy God, whom they loved and served, had come to talk with him. It is not any wonder that Moses trembled, and hid his face in fear. But God had work for him to do, so he spoke to him again, and told him he was going to bring his people away from Egypt and from being slaves any longer. He would not only make them free, but he would bring them into a beautiful land.

They would need a leader to speak for them to the king, and take them to this good land ; so God said, "Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh." But Moses was afraid, for he thought he was not fit to do this thing. "Who am I," he said, "that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

But God told Moses that he would be with him, and always help him, and if the people asked who sent him, he must say, "I AM hath sent me to you." This was God's sacred name that the people of Israel never dared to speak. And surely if the great I AM had sent Moses to them with a message they must believe him.

God talked a long time with Moses there in the desert, and told him just what to do ; how he should go to Pharaoh, and tell him he must let Israel go, and that he must keep them no longer as slaves.

But Moses was still afraid. He said he was slow to talk, and that he couldn't speak to the king as he ought. But God told him to obey him and go, and he would teach him what to say. He also told Moses to take his brother Aaron with him, and they could help each other. God promised to be with them both, and that no harm should come to either of them.

So Moses went and told his father-in-law that he wanted to go back to Egypt; and Jethro, instead of trying to keep him, said to him, "Go in peace." Then Moses took his wife and his sons, and went back to the land where he was born.

His brother Aaron, who saw him coming, went out to meet him and kissed him. It was a long time since they had seen each other, and they were glad to meet again, and tell all that had happened to them since they parted. Moses told his brother of the wonderful work God had given them to do. It was quite time they began it, and so they went away at once and gathered the people of Israel together.

Aaron was the one who talked with them, and when he told them how God pitied them, and that he would save them from the cruel Egyptians, they were glad. They believed this good word that God had sent them. They had suffered much, and almost thought God had forgotten them, and now they were so happy at the good news of his love and care for them, that they bowed their heads in worship.

King Pharaoh must be told this message that God had sent him, so one day Moses and Aaron went to the palace and asked to speak with him. When he came, they stepped boldly forth and

said: "The Lord God of Israel bids you let his people go. They wish to hold a feast out yonder in the wilderness." But Pharaoh proudly asked: "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go."

Then Moses and Aaron pleaded with him, to let the people go for a three days' journey only into the desert; they wanted to go out there and worship their God. This made Pharaoh very angry, and he told Moses and Aaron that they wanted only to get the people away from their work. His anger was so great that he treated Israel even more cruelly after this, and commanded the masters whom he had set over them not to give the people any more straw to use in making their bricks. They must make as many bricks as before, but find their own straw; so the poor people went about all over the land trying to gather the straw which they needed. This took them such a long time that of course they couldn't make their usual number of bricks, and for this they were beaten by their cruel masters.

When the children of Israel sent men to ask King Pharaoh why they were treated so badly, he answered that it was because they were idle. They were getting into idle ways or they

wouldn't have asked to go, and Pharaoh told them again they must keep on making just as many bricks, but no straw would be given them.

This was a sad state of things indeed. The people even blamed Moses for trying to help them, and they complained to him that they were a great deal worse off than before he spoke to the king about them. Moses felt very sorry for them, and he told God all about their trouble, and the Lord heard him and spoke to him words of comfort. He assured him again that he would surely be with his people, as he had promised, and that he would deal with King Pharaoh in such a way that he would let them go.

So Moses went again to the king, and said to him that the God of Israel had bidden him to let the people go. But he proudly refused to obey. Then God bade Moses to strike the water of the river Nile with the wonderful rod he had given him. He did so, and lo! all the water of the river was turned into blood. This was a dreadful thing to happen, for the water of this river was all the people of Egypt had to use, and they were filled with fear when they saw what had been done. No one could drink the water, and they became so thirsty that they were obliged to dig wells away from the river.

God sent Moses a great many times after this

to King Pharaoh to ask him to let Israel go, but he would not obey. He couldn't think of losing the work of all those Hebrew slaves. This king had a great many treasures which he wanted kept safely, and his slaves were building great cities in which to store them, and he could not spare them. He answered "No," every time that Moses asked him to do so.

Then God made dreadful things to happen in the land of Egypt. One day the people awoke to find frogs everywhere. Their homes were full of them, and they ran all over their food. Then another day millions of lice came to plague them, and the dust under their feet was all alive with them. Then there came great swarms of flies, so that the air was thick with them, and these dreadful flies were in the houses of the Egyptians only. In that part of Egypt where the children of Israel lived there were no flies at all. But Pharaoh's palace was full of them. He promised if he could get rid of these pests, he would then let Israel go. But as soon as the flies had gone away he refused to keep his promise.

Then God sent a fearful sickness upon the cattle of Egypt, and they all died. Only the cattle that belonged to the children of Israel were saved. Then another disease was sent

among them, and all the people and the cattle, too, had sores break out on them.

Then one day there was a terrible hail-storm in Egypt. The noise of the thunder was fearful, and the hailstones spoiled nearly all the food that was growing in the fields.

Then, again, a great army of locusts came, and they ate all the food that had not been destroyed by the hail.

The servants of Pharaoh knew that God was sending all these dreadful things to make the king obey him, so they begged of Pharaoh to let Israel go. But he remained as hard-hearted as ever, and would not heed God's command.

Then there came intense darkness all over the land. For three days the people could not stir from their houses, it was so dark. But God took care of his own people Israel, and there was plenty of light in all their houses.

Once more Moses asked Pharaoh to let the people go, but the king refused again, and told Moses to go away, for he wanted to see his face no more. Moses told him he had said truly, for he should indeed see his face no more.

God sent one more trial upon Egypt. It was more awful than anything that had happened before. At midnight it was found that the first-born child in every house was dead. Pharaoh's

own child was lying dead in the palace, and every house in the land was filled with sorrow. The Bible tells us a great cry went up all over Egypt.

But among the people of Israel no child had died. They were told to sprinkle some blood upon their doorposts for a sign. They did so, and the death angel passed over all the houses that had the marks of blood. The people were so glad that, every year after this, when the day came around, they made a feast which they called the "Feast of the Passover."

Pharaoh's hard heart was touched at last. He was in such a hurry now for Israel to go, that he called up Moses and Aaron in the night, and bade them rise and go forth out of the land as quickly as they could. He commanded them to take their flocks and their herds and be gone. The people of Egypt were as eager to get rid of them as their king, and they said to him, "Send these people out of the land in haste, or we be all dead men." They drove them away in such a hurry that the poor people had to take their bread without its being baked. They borrowed of the Egyptians the things which they needed for their journey, and the Egyptians were glad to lend to them, for now they wanted very much to get rid of them.

It was an immense army that marched out of Egypt that night. We are told there were six hundred thousand men, besides all the women and children. They took their way through a wild region that brought them to the Red Sea. Moses led them forth, and soon they had another wonderful guide. God sent a cloud in the form of a pillar to go before them and lead the way. In the night it glowed like fire, and gave them all the light they needed.

When King Pharaoh found that the children of Israel had fled, he was sorry he had let them go. He said to his servants, "Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" He thought they couldn't have gone very far as yet, so he made ready his own chariot, and took with him six hundred thousand other chariots, with their captains, and he followed after the hosts of Israel as fast as he could, and soon overtook them.

This great Israelitish army was resting in its camp by the sea without any thought of danger. When they heard a noise and saw the Egyptians coming, they cried out with fear, and began to find fault with Moses for bringing them there. They said it would have been better for them to have been buried in Egypt than to come into the desert to die.

But Moses told them not to fear. They had only to wait and see how God would save them. He would not allow the Egyptians to harm them. Indeed, from that day they would see them no more forever. Moses also told them that it was God's command that they "go forward." They wondered how they could do this, for the Red Sea was before them, and they had no boats in which to cross it.

The Egyptians thought that the people of Israel could not possibly get away from them, so they stopped to rest for the night not far away. Then a wonderful thing happened that was a great help to Israel. The pillar of cloud that had gone before them now went behind, and stood between them and the Egyptians. The side toward the children of Israel was so bright that it lighted up all their camp, but the side toward the Egyptians was very dark, so that they could see nothing that was going on about them.

The people believed what Moses had told them about their being saved, and they watched to see what he would do. He still carried with him his wonderful rod, and at God's command he stretched it over the waters of the Red Sea. They parted just there, for God sent a strong east wind, that blew all night and made the waters go back. This formed a dry path for

them, so that all the great army of Israel marched right through the middle of the sea. The waters stood up like a great wall on each side of them, until they had safely crossed over.

When Pharaoh saw how easily the Hebrews were crossing through the middle of the sea, he drove after them with his horses and his chariots and all his army. But it was not easy for the Egyptians with their chariots and horses to drive over this strange path through the sea. They could move but slowly, and by and by their chariot wheels came off, and they were in great trouble. Some of the Egyptians were so afraid they begged of the king to go back. But Pharaoh was too proud to do that, and so tried to struggle on. It was then at God's command that Moses again stretched his rod over the sea. When it was morning the water began to come back and cover the Egyptians. They tried to flee before it, but it overtook them so quickly that Pharaoh and all his army were drowned. The people of Israel were grateful that God had saved them in such a wonderful way, so they sang with Moses a beautiful song of praise. Miriam, the sister of Moses, played upon her timbrel, and all the women of Israel joined in the song.

From the banks of the Red Sea, the people began their journey to the beautiful land of

Canaan, which God had promised should be their home. But they soon grew tired, and began to complain of the desert land through which they were going. Although God sent them food every day, and made water flow from the rock to give them drink, they were still unhappy.

They often forgot how good God had been to them, and were a great trial to Moses. They longed for the food they used to have in Egypt, and seemed not to remember their hard life there. They even wanted to have a god like those the Egyptians worshipped, and so one day they made a golden calf. Moses was very angry that God's people, to whom he had been so kind, should do such a wicked thing.

If they had been obedient and tried to serve God as they ought, they would have had a pleasant and quick journey to the land of Canaan. But they kept on fretting and complaining instead of making the best of things.

At last God bade Moses tell them that, because they had been so wicked and ungrateful, they should never reach the beautiful land; and so they were kept going back and forth in that dreary desert for forty long years. The children of those who had left Egypt had grown up by that time, and they were allowed to enter Canaan. The most delicious fruits

grew there, and the land was so rich it was said to flow with milk and honey.

Moses was a good man, and tried to serve God fully, but at one time he forgot and did something that was wrong. God forgave him the sin, but told him that he could not permit him to enter the promised land.

One beautiful day he climbed a mountain, and from its top he could see all that lovely country. He saw the winding rivers, that looked like silver threads as they flowed through the green meadows. And there were the beautiful lakes that shone like mirrors in the sun. And then the flowers, how bright they were in the lovely valleys, and how many different kinds there were! Surely it was a goodly land, and Moses was glad he could see what it was like, even if he could not live there.

He had now grown to be an aged man, for the Bible tells us that he lived to be one hundred and twenty years old. He died on that lonely mountain of Nebo, and somewhere in the valley near by he was buried. No one but God ever knew where he was laid.

All who read the story of Moses must admire his grand life. From a little slave boy upon the banks of the Nile, he grew to be a great and good man, and the wise leader of his people.

JOSHUA, THE BRAVE SOLDIER

WHEN Moses was leading the children of Israel through the wilderness to the land which God' had promised them, he had a faithful helper in Joshua. We first hear of him when he was sent out to lead the army in a fight against the sons of Amalek, a fierce and warlike people. Moses chose Joshua for this post of danger because he was a good and true man, and a soldier whom he could trust. The battle lasted all day until the going down of the sun. Then Joshua brought back the good news to Moses that their enemy was beaten.

We hear of Joshua again on the day when Moses was called to go up on Mount Sinai and receive from God the ten commandments. Joshua went with him a part of the way when he climbed the mountain, and was the first to greet him when he came down after staying there forty days.

The people of Israel were kept in the wilderness many years, going about from place to place, wherever they were led by Moses. At last they

came near to the borders of the land of Canaan, and they were anxious to know what kind of a place it was. There were twelve tribes of these people, and they bore the names of the twelve sons of Jacob.

Moses thought the best way to find out about this land was to send men on before them to explore it. So he chose one of their chief men from each of the twelve tribes to do this work; and Joshua was the one chosen from the tribe of Ephraim. Moses wanted these men to tell him what kind of a land it was; if the soil was good so that food and fruits would grow; whether there were any cities there, and if so, what sort of people lived in them.

The men left the camp of Israel, as Moses directed them, and went up and down through all the land of Canaan. It was the time of the year when grapes were ripe, and as they came to the brook Eshcol they found the most wonderful clusters of this fruit they had ever seen. The men cut off one of these clusters to carry back with them, and they found it so heavy that it took two of them to carry it.

When the men came back to report what they had seen, most of them told a sad tale. They said to Moses that it was true, the land was a goodly one. It was rich and fruitful, as might

be seen by the wonderful cluster of grapes they had brought back. But they said many fierce and cruel people dwelt there, who had great cities with strong walls to defend them. Then, too, they had seen a race of giants who were called the sons of Anak. As they stood by them the men said they felt like grasshoppers in size.

These faint-hearted spies ended their report by assuring Moses, "We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we." When the people heard this dismal story, they wept with sorrow. They blamed Moses and Aaron, and wished they had never left Egypt. They even went so far as to talk of choosing a captain to lead them back to the land where once they were slaves.

Joshua and his friend Caleb, who was also one of the twelve spies, rent their garments when they heard of this plan. That seems to us a strange thing to do, but people in those days used to show their sorrow or anger in this way. Caleb and Joshua told a different story from the rest of the spies. They said that the land they passed through was an exceeding good land, flowing with milk and honey. What if the people who lived there were warlike, and some of them giants — God had prom-

ised Israel the land, and he would help them to conquer it.

But the people kept on murmuring against God, and he was so much displeased with their conduct that he said not one of all who left Egypt with Moses should enter the land of Canaan, except the two spies, Caleb and Joshua, who told the truth about the land. Those only who were children when they began their journey through the great wilderness, and had grown up since, should see the land that had been promised.

The forty years of their wandering had nearly passed, and Moses, who knew that he must soon die, chose Joshua to take his place and lead the people to their home in Canaan. Soon after the death of Moses, God sent this command to the new leader, "Arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give them, even to the children of Israel."

With this command God gave Joshua some wonderful promises to cheer him. He said, "There shall not a man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

But God told Joshua he must do his part, "he must be strong and of good courage." He

must obey the law that Moses received from God, and "turn not from it to the right hand or to the left." Then God told Joshua again to be strong and of good courage, and not be afraid to go forward. "The Lord thy God is with thee," he said, "whithersoever thou goest."

The time had come for them to enter the land that was promised them, so Joshua sent for the officers of the people. He told these men to go among all the different tribes of Israel, and tell them to prepare food for a journey. In three days they were to cross the Jordan, into the land which lay beyond the river.

Two tribes and a half had been given their homes on the side of the river where they then were. All the women and children of these tribes were to remain behind in this land of theirs. The men were to go forward, and help in taking the country beyond. Joshua told the people that he was to be their leader now, and they must help him in every way they could. They replied that all he commanded them they would surely do, and that wherever he wanted to lead them they would be ready to follow.

Soon after crossing the river, the army of Joshua would come to the strong and walled city of Jericho. Joshua was a prudent general, so he sent over two men secretly to see what

they could find out about the strength of the city. They reached there in safety, and went first to the house of Rahab, a woman who lived just inside the city wall. They had been seen to enter, and some of the men of the city came to Rahab and asked who the strangers were, while others went and told the king of Jericho. They said, "Behold, there come men in hither to-night of the children of Israel to search out the country."

Then the king sent this message to Rahab, "Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country."

But Rahab had seen the king's messengers coming, and so she hastily hid the two spies that Joshua had sent, under some stalks of flax that were drying upon the roof of her house. When the men asked where her guests were, she pretended they had gone out through the gate in the wall and had left the city.

Thinking that the strangers couldn't have gone far, the men ran out, in haste to overtake them. As soon as Rahab knew that the men must be a long distance away, she uncovered the spies who were hidden under the flax. She told them to hasten and leave the city as soon as possible. She had heard about the people of

Israel, and of the God whom they worshipped; how he had brought them through the Red Sea, and had done many things for them. The people of her city, too, had heard of Israel's God, and they were sore afraid of the armies who fought in his name. If they should come to take the city of Jericho, the dwellers there would be too faint-hearted to defend it.

This was just what Joshua had sent the men to find out, and now they were quite ready to leave the city and carry him the news.

But Rahab, who had been so kind to these spies, begged of them not to let any harm come to her or her father's house. The men assured her that whatever befell the city she and her father's family should be spared; and then she let them down from the windows on the outside of the wall with a scarlet cord. They told her to bind this cord in her window, and then when the armies of Israel came to take the city they would know which house to save.

The spies returned in safety to Joshua and told him their good news. They said to him, "Truly the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us."

These Israelites had a sacred chest which they regarded as their greatest treasure. It was made

of acacia wood, and overlaid with pure gold both within and without, and was called the "Ark of the Covenant." It contained a pot of the manna with which God fed the people while they were passing through the desert. In it, too, were kept the Rod of Aaron and the two tables on which the ten commandments were written.

This Ark had rings on each of its four corners, and through them were put staves of wood overlaid with gold, by which the men who had the care of this precious chest could carry it from place to place. This Ark was to be carried before them when they began their march towards Canaan. As soon as they saw it going forward, they were to follow it, and when it stopped they were to stop.

And now a strange and wonderful thing happened. As soon as the feet of the priests who carried the Ark touched the river, the water parted and let all the people go over on dry land. They came out nearly opposite Jericho, and the people of the city must have felt more faint-hearted than ever when they saw this great army crossing the Jordan in such a wonderful way.

Joshua wanted the people to remember always how God had helped them in this first

part of their journey. So he told twelve men, one out of every tribe, to take each of them a stone from the bed of the river. These stones they were told to pile up together in a certain place for a mark or memorial. When, in the future days, their children should ask the meaning of this heap of stones, their fathers should tell them that the waters of the Jordan were once cut off, and the Ark of the Covenant and all the great army of Israel passed over the river on dry land.

The people of Jericho were so frightened at what they had seen of the Israelites, that they shut themselves up in their city. They would allow no one to go out or come in, but waited in great fear to see what would happen.

And now there came a strange command to Joshua. He was told to form an army, at the head of which should be a company of armed men, and after them seven priests should follow, bearing the Ark of the Covenant. Each of these priests should carry a trumpet made of rams' horns. All the mighty men of war were to follow the priests, and they were to march around the city of Jericho, once every day for seven days. On the seventh day, instead of marching around once only, they were to compass it seven times. At the seventh and last

time, all the priests were to blow a loud and long blast upon their horns, and the walls of Jericho would fall.

The people who were shut up in the city must have wondered at the strange way in which the army of Israel was behaving. Perhaps some of them may have made merry over the sight of a great host, marching daily around their city and doing nothing. Some of the men themselves, who formed this army, may have doubted if any good would come of it.

But lo! as they passed around the city the seventh time on the last day of their march, the wonderful thing that had been foretold came to pass. The priests blew a long blast upon their rams' horns, and at the same time all the people gave a great shout. The stone walls of Jericho fell with a crash, and each man in the army could pass right into the city from where he stood.

Out of all the people who lived in Jericho, Rahab and her family were the only ones saved. The scarlet cord which she bound in her window told the soldiers of Israel where their kind friend lived.

The fame of Joshua spread over all the land. The wicked nations, whom God had commanded him to destroy, were afraid when they saw his

army approaching. The city of Ai, with its wicked king, soon fell before them, and the soldiers found many treasures there; but they were forbidden to take any of them. Everything was to be destroyed.

It was not long until the people who lived in the hill country of Canaan heard of the great army which had marched into their land. The marvellous story of the fall of Jericho, and of the taking of Ai, filled them with wonder. By and by this army, under its brave leader, would be making an attack upon them. Those who lived in Gibeon were afraid to meet the Israelites in open fight, so they laid a cunning plan to deceive Joshua, and make him willing for them to remain. Some of the men dressed themselves in very old clothes. They put their food into some old sacks, and their wine into leather bottles that would hardly hold together. Their shoes were full of holes and their bread was dry and mouldy. The army of Joshua was in camp at Gilgal when these men appeared at his tent. They said to him, "We be come from a far country: now therefore make a league with us." Joshua asked them, "Who are ye? and from whence come ye?"

And they said, "From a very far country have

we come." But they had heard, they said, of the God of Israel and of all that he did in Egypt. So the elders of their land had told them to take provisions enough with them and go forth to meet Israel. They assured Joshua that when they first left their country their food was fresh and hot. Now they said, "Behold it is dry and it is mouldy; and these bottles of wine which we filled were new; and, behold, they be rent: and these our garments and our shoes are become old by reason of the very long journey."

This was such a very fair story that Joshua believed it, and made a league with them, that their people should not be harmed.

In a few days after, Joshua learned that these men, instead of living in a country afar off, were their near neighbors. He called them to him, and reproved them for telling him such an untruth. He asked them what they meant by saying they were far away, when they were really near by.

Then Joshua told them that on account of their wrong-doing they should no longer be a free people. They might dwell in the land, but henceforth they must be the servants of Israel. They would have to do all the hard work of hewing wood and drawing water for the people whom they had deceived. The men of Gibeon

agreed to do this, and gave as a reason for their conduct that they were sore afraid of a people whose God had done for them such wonderful things.

Joshua made no more leagues with the wicked nations about him, but went forward and drove them from the land as God had commanded him. Then he divided the country among the twelve tribes, and gave each of them a portion of land for their very own. Here they made their homes and pastured their flocks, and ate of the delicious food and fruits which grew there.

Joshua wished them to remember how kind and merciful God had been to them, so one day he called the people before him. He spoke of the wonderful way in which the Lord had led them, and told them they ought always to obey him. He said to them, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." The time had come when they must make a choice between the gods of the heathen people who once lived in the land and the true God. "As for me and my house," said Joshua, "we will serve the Lord."

The people answered just as he hoped they would; they said: "God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods. For the Lord our God, he it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, and

preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all people through whom we passed. Therefore will we also serve the Lord ; for he is our God."

Then Joshua said to them that if they forgot this promise and forsook the Lord, that he would turn against them. They replied, "Nay, but we will serve the Lord."

Joshua bade them to put away any of the strange gods they might have among them and incline their hearts unto the Lord God of Israel.

The people once more promised, and said, "The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey."

Joshua wrote the words of their promise in the book of the law of God. Then he took a great stone and set it up by an oak tree that was near their place of worship. And Joshua said to the people that when they saw the stone it would bring to their minds all they had promised, for they must never forget or deny their God.

The people over whom Joshua had watched so long were soon after called to part with their leader, who died at the great age of a hundred and ten years. He was of the tribe of Ephraim, and they buried him on the

land belonging to them on the side of a beautiful hill.

Among all the tribes of Israel there was not a more faithful man than Joshua, the brave soldier.

SAMSON AND THE PHILISTINES

FOR many years after the death of Joshua, who led the tribes of Israel into Canaan, his followers kept the sacred promise which they had made him. They obeyed God's law and kept from worshipping the idol gods of the nations around them. But they must have neglected to tell their children of God's goodness or teach them to serve him. For when the fathers passed away, and their sons and daughters had grown to be men and women, the Bible tells us they knew not the Lord nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. "So they forsook the Lord God of their fathers and did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim or Baal."

This was the supreme idol god of the Canaanites, and there were temples for his worship all over the land. They usually placed the images of this god on some high hill or on the roofs of their houses.

There were numerous priests to serve this god, and it was a part of their worship to

dance around his altar, screaming and shouting. Sometimes they cut themselves with knives, that they might in this way gain the favor of Baal.

God was much displeased with the people who had so wickedly forsaken him. They had left off serving him, and they soon fell into the hands of the cruel nations around them. Wrong-doing always brings sorrow in the end, as these Israelites soon found.

Among the nations whom they failed to drive out, as God commanded them, were the Philistines, and they owned the land where lived the tribes of Dan and Judah. The people of these tribes never felt safe in their homes, for they knew not at what time they might be attacked by the Philistines.

A woman of the tribe of Dan, who was the wife of Manoah, was visited one day by an angel, who told her that by and by a little son would be given her. He said that this child must always be a Nazarite. Those who belonged to this order and were called by this name were set apart for some sacred work. This child when he was grown up was to begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines. If this was to be his work, his parents wanted to know just how to take care of him

so as to fit him for doing it in the best manner ; so Manoah prayed to God for wisdom.

God heard his prayer and sent the angel again to the child's mother, and as soon as he appeared she ran and called her husband. He said to the angel, "How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?"

When the angel had told them all that they wished to know, Manoah said to him, "Let us detain thee until we have made ready a kid for thee."

But the angel refused to be entertained in that way, and told Manoah, if he had any offering he must make it to the Lord. So Manoah took the kid which he had prepared and offered it upon a rock near by, and lo ! as the flame went up the angel of God ascended with it into heaven, and Manoah and his wife fell upon their faces to the ground.

From this time forth these parents felt that they must take the greatest care of the child, whose coming was made known to them by an angel from heaven. They called his name Samson, which meant sunlike and strong, and as we read his story we shall find he was indeed the very strongest of men.

Samson sometimes went among their troublesome neighbors, the Philistines, and at one time

he happened to see a young woman there whom he wanted for a wife. His father and mother were not pleased with his choice, but at last they consented to let him do as he wished in this matter. While Samson was on his way to Timnath, where this young woman lived, a lion came out and roared against him. We shall see now how he used upon the lion the great strength which God had given him. The Bible tells us that "the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand." Samson told no one, not even his father or his mother, of what he had done.

The young woman whom he went to see was willing to become his wife, and so after a while he went again to Timnath to attend the marriage. As Samson was passing by the place where he had killed the lion, he saw that the bees had made a hive among the bones of the animal. It was certainly a strange place for the bees to choose as a storehouse for their honey, and Samson thought he would make out of the incident a fine riddle to entertain the guests at the marriage.

He made a great feast, and it was attended by thirty of his companions. This feast was to last seven days, so Samson told his friends he

was going to give them a riddle. If they could guess it within the seven days, he would give them thirty sheets and thirty changes of garments. But he told them that if they failed to guess it, then they must give him the thirty sheets and the thirty changes of garments.

The guests agreed to this plan, and said to Samson, "Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it."

So he gave them this: "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." The guests at the feast puzzled over this riddle for three days, and none of them were able to guess it.

Then they went to Samson's wife and said, "Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle." They even threatened to burn her and her father's house with fire if she would not do as they wished.

But when his wife asked him, Samson refused to tell her. He said, "Behold, I have not told it my father nor my mother, and shall I tell it thee?"

Then she wept, and said it must be he hated her instead of loving her, or he would never have given to her people a riddle without telling her the meaning of it. She begged of Samson every day to tell her, and she wept about it so

much, that at last, on the seventh day, he gave her the meaning of the riddle. Then she went directly and told her people, and so, when the time came to answer, they said, "What is sweeter than honey? and what is stronger than a lion?" Then Samson knew that his wife had told his secret and he was angry with her. But he was a man who kept his word, and so he gave the thirty changes of garments as he had promised, and then he went back to his father's house.

After a time Samson thought he would go down again to Timnath, and visit his wife. But her father wouldn't allow him to see her or have her for a wife any more, for he said to Samson, "I verily thought thou hadst utterly hated her."

This father-in-law not only refused to let Samson see his daughter, but he had given her away to some one else. Samson, of course, was very angry at this treatment, and he formed a strange plan to punish the people who had done him this great wrong.

In order to carry it out, he went into the woods and caught three hundred foxes and tied firebrands to their tails.

Then he let them go into the wheat-fields of the Philistines, where much of the grain was

ready for the harvest, and where the standing wheat was still growing. The firebrands not only set the grain on fire, but destroyed the olive groves and vineyards of his enemies.

They asked, "Who hath done this?" and when they were told that Samson had caused all this destruction because his wife's father had taken her from him, the Philistines came up and burnt her and her father with fire.

In those early days people seemed to place little value upon human life. They thought nothing of killing each other with the sword, or burning one another with fire if they felt angry.

After this Samson went and dwelt by himself on the top of a rock in the land of Judah. The Philistines soon found out the place of his retreat, and came there with their armies; and the men of Judah went to Samson in great fear, and said to him: "Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us? What is this thou hast done unto us?"

Samson replied, "As they did unto me, so have I done unto them." Then the men of Judah told him they had come down to bind him, so that they might deliver him to the Philistines.

Samson made them promise not to attack

him themselves, and they said, "Nay; but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand: but surely we will not kill thee."

So they brought him up from the rock, and bound him fast with two new cords. When they came to a place called Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him. It was no doubt a shout of triumph, for they were glad to get Samson in their power.

Then the Bible tells us that "the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him," and he burst the cords off from his arms as easily as though they had been flax. Then he caught up the jawbone of an ass that he found upon the ground, and with this strange weapon he killed a thousand men.

The Israelites were proud of this strong man, who could perform such wonderful deeds in fighting the dreaded Philistines. They thought him worthy of becoming their ruler, so he served Israel as their judge for twenty years.

The city of Gaza belonged to the Philistines, and it had a strong wall to defend it and heavy gates to make it secure. Samson made a visit to Gaza at one time, and when the men of the city were told that he was there, they put a guard about the walls and kept as quiet as they could. They said to themselves, "In the morning, when it is day, we shall kill him."

But Samson rose at midnight and took the doors of the city gates and the two posts, and went away with them. He not only took these doors, but the bars that held them, and putting them upon his shoulders he carried them to the top of a hill near Hebron.

How astonished the people of Gaza must have been, in the morning, to find the gates of their city gone, and more astonished still when they learned that Samson had actually carried them upon his shoulders to the top of a high hill.

The Philistines were determined to capture in some way this strong man, who was making them so much trouble. Among his friends in that country was a woman named Delilah, and to her the Philistines went for help. They said to her, "Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we can prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him: and we will give thee, every one of us, eleven hundred pieces of silver."

So Delilah said to Samson, "Tell me wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee."

Samson replied that if he was bound with seven green withes that were never dried, then he would be weak like other men.

Delilah bound him with the green withes, and

then cried out, "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson."

They were hidden quite near, as Delilah knew, and at her call they sprang forward to seize their victim. But Samson had already burst the withes, and throwing them from him, had made himself free.

Delilah was much displeased, and said to Samson, "Behold, thou hast mocked me, and told me lies." Then she urged him again to tell her what made him so strong, and how he might be bound. Samson told her that if they would bind him fast with new ropes that had never been used, then they would find him as weak as other men.

The ropes were brought and Samson was tightly bound ; but when Delilah told him the Philistines were coming, he broke them off from his arms as though they had been threads.

Delilah still persisted in begging of Samson to tell her wherein his great strength lay, and again he mocked her by telling her of another way in which he could be bound, and this of course proved as worthless as the others. But she was not discouraged, and kept on teasing Samson every day until he was so vexed that he told her his secret. His strength, he assured her, lay in his long hair, which had never been

cut since he was born. The vow of the Nazarene was upon him, and those who were set apart in this way kept their hair always uncut.

"If it be shaven," he said, "then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak and like any other man." Samson was so sure of his strength, and that the Philistines would find it impossible to bind him, that he foolishly thought he would risk even the cutting of his hair.

Delilah sent word to the lords of the Philistines that at last Samson had told her the truth. They came with the money they had promised, and were willing to pay her as soon as they had captured Samson.

While he was fast asleep one day she directed one of the men to cut off his long hair. When he awoke and she told him the Philistines had come, not knowing what had happened, he rose up and said, "I will go out and shake myself as before." But his enemies were near at hand, and when they rushed forward to grasp him, poor Samson found he had no strength to resist them. They bore him off to the city of Gaza, whose gates he once carried off upon his shoulders. They then bound him with fetters of brass, and cruelly put out his eyes, and set him to hard work in the prison. How many weary days he must have spent there, grinding grain

in the stone mills which were so hard to turn. But by and by Samson's hair began to grow again, and he could feel his strength coming back to him.

These Philistines worshipped an idol god whom they called Dagon. He had many temples for his worship, and the most famous one was at Gaza. This idol was a hideous-looking image "with the face and hands of a man, and the tail of a fish."

The Philistines were full of gratitude to Dagon, because, as they thought, he had delivered Samson their strong enemy into their hands. They thought it a fitting time to make a sort of thanksgiving sacrifice to their god in his temple. So great crowds gathered there, and they all rejoiced and praised Dagon, saying, "Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us."

When they became excited and merry, some one cried out, "Call for Samson, that he may make us sport."

And so they brought him from the prison and he made sport for them, by showing what wonderful things he could do with his strong arms. As he was blind, a lad had to lead him into the temple and attend him while there.

Samson asked this lad to let him feel of the pillars of the temple, that he might lean upon them. There was a large crowd of people to see his great feats of strength, for the Bible says, "All the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport."

He felt that perhaps the time had now come when he could punish these wicked Philistines, who had put out his eyes, and were so cruelly mocking him. He prayed earnestly in his heart, and said, "O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines of my two eyes."

Then Samson took hold of the middle pillars which held up the temple, the one with his right hand, the other with his left. And with this last prayer, "Let me die with the Philistines," he bowed himself with all his might, and the walls of the temple fell with a crash. All the people within were killed, and of course Samson met his death with them. He slew more than all he had slain before.

When his brothers heard of what had happened, they came and took his body from the ruins, and carried it to the burying-place of Manoah his father.

THE STORY OF RUTH

THE land of Canaan, where the Israelites lived, was a very fruitful one, and was always described as "flowing with milk and honey." There were large olive groves, and from their fruit was made the olive oil that was of so much value. There were fine vineyards everywhere, and the soil was rich, so that many kinds of vegetables grew, besides wheat and all other grain which the people needed.

But sometimes a drought would come upon the land, and no rain would fall for many months. Then the earth would become parched and dry, and the food and fruits that were growing would wither up and die. At the time when men who were called judges ruled over Israel, there was one of these droughts, which proved so serious that some of the people had to go away and live in other countries.

The family of Elimelech, who lived in Bethlehem-judah, found the famine so sore in that place that they decided to leave it and go to the land of Moab. They had heard that food was plentiful there, and so Elimelech, with his wife

Naomi, and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, made their home in this country. As it was a pleasant land and they had food enough for their wants, no doubt they were contented and happy while they lived there.

Their two sons chose each of them a wife from the daughters of Moab, and their names were Orpah and Ruth. But after a while there came a bitter sorrow to the family, for Elimelech the father died, and afterward both of the sons. Naomi and her daughters-in-law were all left widows, and were filled with grief for their loss. The mother had been in the land of Moab for ten years, and now in her sorrow she longed to see her old home once more. She had heard that the famine was past, and that food was now plentiful in Canaan, and she felt that she could stay away from there no longer. She called her daughters-in-law and told them of her plan, and they started to go a part of the way with her upon the journey; and they kept on walking with her until they were a long distance from Moab.

At last Naomi said to them that they would better each of them return to her mother's house, and she hoped the Lord would deal kindly with them, as they had dealt with her. "Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their

voice and wept," and they said to her, "Surely we will return with thee unto thy people." But Naomi said that would not be wise; they ought to turn back and go to their own homes.

When she gently insisted upon their obeying her, they both wept again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law and sadly turned away, but Ruth clung to her closer than ever. Naomi said to her, "Behold thy sister-in-law has gone back unto her people, and unto her gods; return thou after thy sister-in-law."

But Ruth replied, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."

Ruth was so much in earnest about this, and showed such a deep affection for her, that Naomi hadn't the heart to refuse the request of this loving daughter. So she left off speaking any more about Ruth's return, and gladly took her back to the old home in Canaan.

It was a long and hard journey for these two women, but at last they came in sight of Bethlehem. How much sorrow Naomi had seen since

she left it ten years ago! As they stepped within the walls of the city, their coming made quite a stir there, for "all the city was moved about them." They said, "Is this Naomi?" This name meant pleasantness, or sweetness, so the poor, sorrowful woman said, "Call me not Naomi, call me Marah"; that word meant bitter, and she added: "the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?"

But Naomi had this good daughter to live with her and comfort her, and they made them a little home together in Bethlehem. They were poor, for, as Naomi said, she had come home empty; and Ruth set about finding something to do so that she might care for this mother whom she so dearly loved.

They had come to Bethlehem just at the time of the barley harvest. The people were reaping their fields and gathering in the ripe barley. It was a beautiful custom of the Israelites to leave a portion of the grain, when they were reaping, for the poor and needy. It was one of the laws which God gave them through Moses, and it gave bread to many a poor family.

Ruth thought that surely she might go and gather some of the grain that was left over, so she said to Naomi, "Let me now go to the field, and glean after him in whose sight I shall find grace." And she said unto her, "Go, my daughter."

Ruth went gladly among the gleaners, and she happened to go with them into the field of Boaz, who was one of the rich men of Bethlehem. He went out one day into the harvest field and spoke kindly to the laborers about their work. As he was looking around he chanced to see Ruth, and asked, "Whose damsel is this?"

The man who had charge of the reapers replied, "It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab." He also told Boaz that she had asked if she might glean there, and she had been in the field ever since morning.

Boaz turned to Ruth and kindly told her not to go into any other field to glean, but to abide there fast by his maidens. If she was thirsty, she might go and drink of the water that was provided for the others who were at work.

Ruth felt so grateful to Boaz for his kind words that she fell upon her face and bowed herself to the ground, and she said to him,

“Why have I found grace in thine eyes that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?”

But Boaz assured her that he had heard all about her kindness, how she had left her own land, and had come to take care of her mother-in-law. He said, “The Lord recompense thy work and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.”

Ruth told him how much his words had comforted her, for he had spoken as friendly to her as though she had been one of his own handmaidens.

Then Boaz invited her to eat with his reapers; and when the meal was over and she went forth to glean again, he told his servants to “let her glean even among the sheaves and reprove her not,” and also to let some of the grain fall on purpose so that she might have enough for her use. She worked hard in the field until the evening, and having gathered a large quantity of barley, she carried it joyfully home to her mother-in-law.

When Naomi saw it, she was surprised that Ruth had gleaned so much, and said to her, “Where hast thou gleaned to-day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee.”

When Ruth replied, "The man with whom I wrought to-day is Boaz," Naomi's heart was full of gladness. "Blessed be the Lord," she cried, "who hath not left off his kindness to the living and the dead." Then Naomi told Ruth that this Boaz was a near relative of theirs, one of their next kinsmen. Ruth told her mother-in-law how kind this man had been to her, saying that she might glean in his field and keep fast by the young men reapers until the end of the harvest.

Naomi replied, "It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field." Ruth kept working with the maidens of Boaz, not only through the barley harvest but all the time they were gathering the wheat; and all this while she lived with her mother-in-law.

One day Naomi told Ruth something more about their kinsman, Boaz, and said it would be well for her to visit him at his threshing-floor, where he was winnowing the barley. So Ruth covered herself with her veil, and went unseen by any one to the threshing-floor. She did not attempt at first to speak to Boaz, lest he might think her coming there an intrusion. So when he had eaten and drunk, and sank down upon a heap of grain to sleep, Ruth went and laid

herself down a little way from his feet. She herself was too anxious about what Boaz would say to her to sleep.

At last when he awoke and found a woman lying at his feet, he said, "Who art thou?" She answered, "I am Ruth thine handmaid, for thou art a near kinsman."

Boaz knew then that Ruth had taken this way of showing him his duty toward her. By their Jewish law it was his place to care for her and give her a home. So he kindly said: "Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter. Fear not, I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people know thou art a virtuous woman."

Boaz not only spoke these kind words to Ruth, but he made her bring the long cloth veil which she wore, and this he filled with barley so that she might not go back empty to her mother-in-law.

When Naomi heard Ruth's story on her return, and saw the present which Boaz had sent, she was quite sure that he would perform all his promises, and if Ruth waited patiently all would come out well.

It seems there was a parcel of land which belonged to Naomi's husband, and now was owned by herself and her daughter-in-law, Ruth.

This land must be sold, and it was the duty of the nearest relative to buy it so that it might not fall into the hands of strangers. There was one relative who was nearer than Boaz, and he must be given the first chance of buying the land. It was the custom in those early days to do all such business openly at the gate of the city. So Boaz, the very next morning after he had seen Ruth, went and sat down by the gate. The kinsman whom he wanted to see soon came along, and Boaz spoke to him about the sale of this land. He told him also that it was the law that whoever bought the land of Ruth must give her a home by becoming her husband. The kinsman said to Boaz that to do this would interfere with his own inheritance, and he would therefore give up all claim of his in the matter. "Redeem thou my right to thyself," he said, "for I cannot redeem it."

In order to make the bargain sure, the man took off his shoe and gave it to Boaz, and by this act all the people knew that these two men had given each other a solemn promise.

Boaz then made a speech to the elders of the city and to the people who had gathered about the gate. He said to them, "Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's,

of the hand of Naomi." He also informed them that he had purchased with the land the right to make Ruth his wife; to which he said, "Ye are witnesses this day."

"We are witnesses," they replied, and they wished that much happiness and prosperity might attend him.

The marriage of Ruth and Boaz took place not long after, and they made their home in Bethlehem.

By and by a little son was born to them, and Naomi welcomed this grandson with a heart full of gladness. Her neighbors came to wish her joy, and said to her, "Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel."

He would be the restorer of her life, they said, and would nourish her old age, for he was the child of the dear daughter who had shown her so much love and kindness, and who had been "better to her than seven sons."

These women who were Naomi's neighbors named the child Obed, which means, serving God. His grandmother tenderly nursed him, and he grew up to be an honored man in the country.

Ruth, who in the kindness of her heart was willing to leave her own country and her kin-

dred that she might cherish and care for her mother-in-law, had a great honor bestowed upon her, for she became the great-grandmother of King David, and was an ancestress of Jesus our Saviour, who was born in Bethlehem, where Ruth had her pleasant home.

SAMUEL, THE FIRST PROPHET

IN Shiloh, a city of the land of Canaan, was set the Tabernacle or Tent in which was kept the Ark of the Covenant. We remember that this was the sacred chest which was so richly overlaid with gold, and which held many things that were precious to the Israelites.

After this people were settled in the land, God chose Shiloh as the place where the Tabernacle should remain, and all the tribes of Israel went there once a year to worship, and offer their sacrifices to God.

Elkanah, a good man who lived in Ramah, went one day with his wife Hannah to perform their yearly act of worship in the Tabernacle. Eli, an aged priest of the Lord, was serving there, and also his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas.

Hannah was much troubled in her mind and her face was sad. She had a kind husband and a good home, but there were no little children of her own to love and cherish. To be the mother of children, especially of sons, was thought to be a great honor among the Hebrews, and those

women who lived in childless homes were looked upon with pity and often with scorn. Hannah had been ill treated that very day for this reason, and in her sorrow she wept bitterly and prayed earnestly to the Lord. She promised that if he would graciously give her a son, she would devote this child to his service all the days of his life.

Eli the priest watched Hannah as she prayed, but as he heard no voice, and saw only her lips move, he thought she must have taken too much wine and knew not what she was doing. As she kept on praying, Eli reproved her for her conduct and said to her, "How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee."

But Hannah answered, "No, my lord; I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord."

Eli seemed to be sorry that he had spoken so harshly to her, and gently said, "Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him."

Hannah was comforted by these kind words, and humbly said, as she went away, "Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight." After another season of worship in the Tabernacle at Shiloh, Elkanah and his wife went on the next day to their home in Ramah.

Hannah's prayer was answered, and one day her heart was made glad as a little son was laid in her arms. He had been asked of the Lord, so she called his name Samuel. How tenderly she cared for him, and we can think of her as singing to him often the sweet songs of Israel.

When the child was old enough to take the journey, Hannah went with Elkanah her husband to worship again at Shiloh. They took with them three bullocks, some fine flour, and a bottle of wine, with which to make a sacrifice to the Lord.

As she brought little Samuel to Eli, she said to the aged priest, "Oh my lord, as thy soul liveth I am the woman who stood by thee praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed: and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him. Therefore also I have lent him unto the Lord: as long as he liveth he shall be lent unto the Lord."

And then this good woman sang a beautiful hymn, which was full of praise to God for his tender mercy toward her. She left Samuel there with Eli to live with him in God's house, and to help him in any work that a child could do.

Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, who were priests of the Lord, were wicked men, and

unfit for that sacred office. Their father knew of their bad conduct, and tried, too late, to persuade them to do better. "Why do ye such things?" he asked. "I hear of your evil doings by all this people. Nay, my sons, it is no good report that I hear; ye make the Lord's people to transgress."

But nothing their father said to them seemed to have any effect upon these wicked sons, and we shall learn later to what a sad end they came.

In the Tabernacle was a beautiful golden candlestick, which was lighted every evening and kept burning through the night. It was Samuel's work to put out the light in this candlestick at sunrise, and then to open the doors of the Tabernacle. He wore a linen ephod or robe fastened with a girdle while he helped Eli in these sacred duties. His mother never forgot her son whom she had lent to the Lord, and every year she made him a little coat, and brought it to him when she went to worship at Shiloh.

As Samuel had to attend the candlestick every morning, he slept at night very near the Holy Place in the Tabernacle. One night, as he was lying in his bed, he heard a voice call, "Samuel;" and he answered, "Here am I."



THE BOY SAMUEL.

From a painting by Reynolds.

Supposing it was Eli who had called him, he ran to him and said, "Here am I, for thou calledst me."

But Eli said, "I called thee not; go lie down again."

Then a second and third time the same voice called, "Samuel;" and the lad ran to Eli and cried out, "Here am I, for thou didst call me."

Eli then thought it surely must be God's voice that had spoken to the child, so he said to Samuel, "Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth."

Again the boy heard this strange voice, and this time it called his name twice, "Samuel, Samuel." And he answered, "Speak; for thy servant heareth."

Then God talked with the child, and told him many things that were going to happen to the people of Israel. Eli would soon be in great trouble and sorrow on account of his wicked sons. They had made themselves vile, and he had not guided nor restrained them as he ought, and a dreadful thing would happen to them.

Samuel must have wondered why this message should have been given to him. He lay there thinking it all over until the morning

came, and then he rose to open the doors of the Tabernacle. He kept bravely about his morning work, hoping that he might not have to tell Eli of his vision.

Finding that Samuel did not appear as usual, Eli called him, and he came directly to him. Eli said: "What is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee? I pray hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide anything from me of all the things that he said unto thee."

After these solemn words of Eli, Samuel dared not disobey him; so he told him everything that the Lord had said. The poor old man was filled with grief, but he knew he had sinned, and he humbly said, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good."

As Samuel grew in stature, he grew in the grace and the knowledge of God. Frequent messages to the people of Israel came to him from the Lord, and soon it was known through all the land that Samuel was to serve them as a prophet of God.

The Philistines, who were so troublesome in the days of Samson, were still the enemies of Israel, and often made fierce and sudden attacks upon them. In one of these battles the Philistines gained a great victory, and the Israel-

ites felt that something unusual must be done to save them from future loss.

Some of the people thought that, if they should take the Ark of God with them into battle, perhaps its presence might in some way help them. So they sent to Shiloh and had the Ark brought into their camp, and with it came the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas. As soon as the Ark entered the camp the Israelites welcomed it with a shout of joy.

The Philistines asked the meaning of this great noise, and when they were told it was because the Ark of God had come, they were sore afraid. They had heard of the God of Israel, that he was mighty and powerful, and had done wonderful things in Egypt. "Woe unto us!" they cried; "who shall deliver us out of the hands of these mighty gods?" To their armies they cried, "Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines! that ye be not servants to the Hebrews; quit yourselves like men, and fight." They did fight more fiercely than ever before, and the men of Israel fled in terror to their tents, for many thousands of their soldiers had been slain, and even the sacred Ark of God was taken; and Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were among the killed.

In those days news of any great event had to be carried by men who were called runners. One of these men, with his clothes rent and his head covered with earth, ran in great haste to Shiloh to tell the news of Israel's defeat. Eli was sitting by the wayside, eagerly waiting for tidings of the battle. When the man with such signs of sorrow appeared, his heart sank within him. Eli trembled for the safety of the Ark of God, and when, later on, he heard a great tumult in the city and the noise of crying, he said, "What meaneth the noise of this tumult?"

The man who had brought the news came in hastily, saying he had fled that day from the army. Eli asked him, "What is done there, my son?"

"Israel hath fled from before the Philistines," he replied, "and there hath been a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the Ark of God is taken."

Eli had borne the sad news bravely when the man told him his two sons were dead, but when he heard that the Ark of God was taken, the precious treasure which he had guarded for so many years, he could hear no more. He fell from his seat, and the fall breaking his neck, he died instantly.

The Philistines took the Ark of God away

with them, but to every place it was carried there came trouble and sorrow to the people. They grew so afraid of this mysterious golden chest that at last they begged of the Israelites to take it from them. Its loss had caused great mourning through all the land of Israel, and the people gladly sent men to bring it home. It abode for many years in a place called Kirjath-jearim.

While the Ark was there Samuel had a serious talk with the people. He told them that God had allowed their enemies to defeat them because they had disobeyed him, and gone after the strange gods of the heathen. He assured them that now, if they would give their hearts to God, and serve him only, he would deliver them out of the hand of the Philistines.

When they had put away their heathen gods as Samuel had advised, he bade the people gather themselves together at Mizpeh, and he would pray to the Lord for them. They humbly obeyed their prophet, who was also their ruler and judge, and they kept a solemn fast there, saying, "We have sinned against the Lord."

The Philistines heard of this gathering at Mizpeh, and thought it a good time to make one of their sudden attacks. The Israelites heard

of their intention in some way, and were in great fear. They said to Samuel, "Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines."

Samuel offered a lamb for a burnt offering, and "cried unto the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him."

While Samuel was making the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near, and began placing their men in order for the battle. Just then a heavy thunder-storm burst over them, and they were so bewildered that the Israelites soon gained the victory.

Samuel set up a memorial stone, where the battle was fought, and called it "Ebenezer," which meant "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." He wanted them to remember with gratitude that God had now given them a wonderful victory in the same place where twenty years before they had suffered such a great defeat. Even after the battle was ended the Israelites pursued their enemies until they drove them from the land, and so had peace with the Philistines during the rest of Samuel's life.

When he became an old man he made his two sons judges in his place. They were not good like their father, and walked not in his ways. They cheated and robbed the people, who soon

grew tired of such rulers. At last the elders of Israel went to Samuel, who lived at Ramah, and told him their trouble. "Thy sons," they said, "walk not in thy ways; now make us a king to judge us like all the nations."

Samuel was not at all pleased with this wish of the people, but he prayed to God for direction in the matter, and he was told to let them have the king they so much desired. But first he should tell them what they must expect from this king. Samuel said to them that the king would take their sons, and would appoint them for himself, that he would make them his horsemen, and some of them would have to run before his chariots. He would make them work in the fields and workshops for him. This king would take their daughters and make them his cooks and bakers. He would take their lands, too, whenever he wanted them, and would take their servants away and make them work for him. Samuel assured them that their king would treat them so badly, that at last they would cry to God for help, and he would refuse to hear.

The people heard these warning words of Samuel, but they could not be persuaded to heed his advice, and cried out even more earnestly, "Nay, but we will have a king over us."

Then God told Samuel to hearken unto their

voice and make them a king. So he sent the elders away and told each of them to go to his own city and prepare for the king that should be given them.

Now there was a young man of the tribe of Benjamin, who was known as Saul, the son of Kish. It was said of him that there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he. He is described as tall and stately, and from "his shoulders up higher than any other man." This was the king that God had chosen to give to his people Israel.

One day Saul's father sent him to find some asses that had strayed away, and he started off with some of the young men to look for them. They searched a long time, but it was all in vain, for the asses were nowhere to be found. Then Saul said to the young men, "Come, let us return." He was afraid his father might be getting anxious about them.

They had come in their wanderings to the place where Samuel lived, and one of the young men, who had heard of him as a man of God who could tell about the future, proposed to call upon this prophet, and ask him where they should look next. Saul agreed to this plan, and when they were near the city they met Samuel coming toward them. God had made

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known to the prophet the kind of man he had chosen, and when Samuel saw Saul the voice of God said to him, "Behold the man I spake to thee of; the same shall reign over my people."

When Saul came up to Samuel, who was standing by the gate of the city, he asked him where he should find the seer or prophet. Samuel replied that he was the one they were looking for, and he invited Saul and his young men to tarry with him a few days. He bade them not to think any more of the asses that were lost three days ago, for now they had been found. Then Samuel asked Saul this strange question which he couldn't at all understand: "On whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on thee, and on all thy father's house?"

Saul replied, "Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore speakest thou so to me?"

Samuel did not answer his question directly, but as they passed out of the city he said to Saul, "Bid the servant pass on before us, but stand thou still awhile, that I may show thee the word of God."

Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and as he poured it on Saul's head he told him he was anointing him to be king over Israel. And then

as he sent him away he told him all that would befall him on the journey home. And everything came to pass as the prophet had said.

The people were impatient for their king to begin his reign, so Samuel called them all together at Mizpeh, and there he talked to them about God's goodness to them ever since he brought them out of the land of Egypt. Once they were content to have no ruler but God, but now they had asked to have another king, and God was about to give them their wish.

Samuel caused the tribes to appear before him, so that the people might see from which of them the king would come. When the tribe of Benjamin was chosen, and the family of Kish came forward, Saul, his son, was the one chosen. But he was not present and they ran out to find him.

When this tall, erect young man came forward, Samuel said, "See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people?" That was true enough, they thought; and the tribes gave a great shout of welcome, crying, "God save the king!"

Saul ruled wisely for a while, but by and by he forgot God's commands, and things went wrong in his kingdom. Samuel reproved him for his foolish conduct in thus disobeying God;

and if he still kept on doing wrong, he was assured that he would at last lose the throne.

We shall learn in another story how and when this came to pass.

Samuel, as we know, was the first of the prophets, and in order that there might be others worthy to follow him, he founded a school in which to teach the young men of his people. This was called the school of the prophets, and was the first of that kind that was ever formed.

Samuel lived to be an old man, and when he died there was great mourning in the land. The Bible says, "all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him." They buried him in his own house on a hill overlooking the town of Gibeon. As this house was probably built of stone, it served as a fitting tomb for the good man who was called to be a prophet of God when a little child.

THE STORY OF DAVID

THE prophet Samuel, of whom we have already learned, felt very bad that Saul, whom he had anointed, and from whom he had hoped so much, had proved such an unworthy king. The Lord was mindful of his sorrow of heart, and one day this word came to Samuel:—

“How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill thine horn with oil, and go, and I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.”

Samuel answered that he was afraid to go, for if Saul should find out his errand there he would surely kill him.

Then the Lord told him to take a heifer and offer it for a sacrifice, and call Jesse's family and the people of Bethlehem to attend this act of worship.

So Samuel went as the Lord directed, and when the elders of the city saw him they trembled, fearing that he had come to reprove them, or punish them perhaps for their

sin. They called out to him to know if he came peaceably, and he answered, "Peaceably : I am come to sacrifice unto the Lord."

Samuel told them to make themselves ready for this worship, and he also called Jesse and his sons to the sacrifice.

When Eliab, Jesse's eldest son, came forward, Samuel thought that surely this kingly-appearing young man was the one God had chosen. But the Lord said to him, "Look not on his countenance, nor on the height of his stature; because I have refused him : the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

Samuel soon learned how true this was, for none of the seven sons of Jesse who followed Eliab was chosen by God.

Samuel asked Jesse if these were all the sons he had, and he replied that there was one other, his youngest son, and he was in the field keeping the sheep. Samuel said, "Send and fetch him; for we will not sit down till he come hither."

The Bible describes David the shepherd boy "as ruddy and of a beautiful countenance." So when he came at his father's call, God said to Samuel, "Arise, anoint him : for this is he."

The prophet took the vial of oil and poured

it upon David's head before all his brothers. Probably none of those who were present at this sacrifice knew what the anointing meant, but thought it was something to do with their act of worship.

The Spirit of the Lord came upon David soon after this anointing by the prophet. Perhaps it gave him the power to begin the writing of the beautiful Psalms, which people have loved to read and sing ever since.

It was not long before the Philistines again gathered an army to fight Israel. They had learned that Saul had lost his power as king, and as they now had a giant warrior to fight for them, they thought it a good time to make an attack.

There were two mountains in the land that faced each other, and there was a valley between them. On one of these mountains the Philistines had placed their men, while on the mountain opposite, Saul and the armies of Israel were gathered. In the camp of the Philistines was Goliath of Gath, a giant who was more than ten feet high. He wore a coat of mail and had a helmet of brass upon his head, and carried a heavy spear which none but himself could handle.

This terrible giant used to march up and

down the valley between the mountains, and call out to the Israelites in a haughty voice to send a man to fight with him. Whoever should conquer in a single fight with him would win the battle against all the Philistine army. But if the giant should conquer the man who fought against him, then the armies of Israel would become the servants of the Philistines.

“I defy the armies of Israel this day,” cried the giant; “give me a man, that we may fight together.”

Goliath marched daily through the valley, and proudly gave his challenge for forty days. Every time the men of Israel heard it they were filled with terror, for not one among them dared to face this fierce giant.

King Saul had sent through all the land, and ordered all the best young men and the bravest to join his army. The three oldest sons of Jesse had gone at his bidding, and were in the mountain camp of Israel. As the days went by, their father grew anxious to hear from them, and he thought some of the home food would taste good to them; so he told David to leave his sheep with a keeper, and go to the army with parched corn and loaves of bread and cheese for his brothers.

David was very glad to go, so he rose up early

in the morning and hurried away upon his journey. He reached the camp of Israel just as each army was getting into battle array. He soon found his brothers. While he was talking to them, Goliath of Gath came out for his daily march in the valley. He cried out fiercely, as he had so many times before, "I defy the armies of Israel; give me a man, that we may fight together."

David heard these words with a swelling heart, and asked some one who stood near, "What shall be done to the man who killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel, for who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

The man answered that whoever should kill this giant, King Saul would give him great riches, and make his father's house free in Israel, and one of the king's daughters should be given him for a wife.

Eliab, David's eldest brother, heard the question which he asked, and saw how interested he was in the answer, and was very angry with him. What business, Eliab thought, had such a stripling to meddle with such matters? He said to him: "Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride and the

naughtiness of thine heart; for thou hast come down that thou mightest see the battle."

David only answered: "What have I done? Is there not a cause?" He wanted to be sure that he had heard aright, so he turned and asked another man the same question, what should be done to the man who killed the proud Philistine? and he was answered as before.

Some one told Saul of this young man who was so interested in learning about the giant, and the king sent for David to come to his tent. He was astonished when David boldly said to him, "Let no man's heart fail him; thy servant will go and fight with the Philistine."

"Thou art not able," Saul replied, "to go against the Philistine to fight with him; for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth."

Then David told Saul that once, while he was keeping his father's sheep, a lion and a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, and that when the lion rose up to attack him, he was strong enough to take him by the beard, and kill him. It was God who had given him the strength, and surely, he said, "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine."

David was so much in earnest, and so sure that he should succeed, that Saul said to him, "Go, and the Lord be with thee." The king thought that whoever should go out to meet such a dangerous foe should be clad in armor, which he kindly offered him. But the shepherd boy had never worn armor before, and Saul's was too large for him, so he threw it aside.

In the fields of Bethlehem, he had learned to be very skilful in using the sling, and he had brought this weapon with him. He went down to the brook near by, and chose five of the smoothest stones he could find, which he put into the shepherd's bag; and now he was ready to meet the Philistine.

When David drew near, and Goliath saw this young man, who seemed to him but a boy, coming to meet him with not even a sword in his hand, but only a staff, he cried out in a scornful voice, "Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves?" and the Philistine cursed David by his gods, and cried out again, "Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field."

But David was not afraid, and bravely said to the angry giant: "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts,

the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day the Lord will deliver thee into my hand; and I will smite thee, and take thy head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know there is a God in Israel. All this assembly shall know," David said, "that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands."

Goliath was more angry than ever when he heard these bold words, and went to meet David, who was running toward him. When at just the right distance, David threw one of the smooth stones from the sling, and he aimed it so well that it sank into the forehead of the giant, and he fell to the earth. Then David ran, and taking the giant's own sword, he cut off his head.

When the Philistines saw that their great warrior was really dead, they were filled with terror, and fled in every direction. The army of Israel, with shouts of victory, chased the Philistines even back to the gates of their own cities.

When Saul saw how bravely David went forth to meet his foe, he asked, "Whose son is

this youth?" Abner, the captain of the army, replied that he could not tell, so Saul said to him, "Inquire whose son the stripling is."

As Abner went out to obey Saul's command, he met David returning from the battle, with the head of Goliath in his hand, and he took him directly into the presence of Saul and his son Jonathan. When asked whose son he was, David replied, "I am the son of Jesse, the Bethlehemite." Saul was so pleased with David's appearance that, after talking with him awhile, he took him into his service, "and would let him go no more to his father's house."

Jonathan was even more pleased with David than his father was, and his affection was returned. The Bible says, "the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." He even stripped off his own princely robe, and his other costly garments, and gave them to David; also his sword, his bow, and even his girdle.

David went wherever Saul directed him, and behaved himself so wisely that he was soon set over a thousand men as their captain. The people loved him, and he gained the favor of all Saul's servants.

After a great victory had been gained in battle, it was the custom in those days for a company

of women to go out with musical instruments, and meet the victorious captains and sing their praises. So when Saul and David were returning from their victory over the Philistines, the women came out from all the cities as they passed, singing and dancing before them. "Saul," they sang, "has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands." This greatly displeased Saul, and he was very angry that the women had sung of himself as having slain thousands only, while David had slain ten thousands.

A wicked feeling of jealousy took possession of his heart from that day forward. Once in an angry fit he threw his javelin, a sharp and dangerous weapon, at David, but missed him. At last Saul became so furious that he would not allow David to come into his presence, but sent him away to be a captain over another part of his army.

But David behaved wisely in all his ways, and the Lord was with him; and when Saul saw this, he was afraid of him, for all the people loved David.

Although Saul had allowed David to become his son-in-law, he hated him more and more as time went on, and he asked Jonathan and even his servants to kill him. Jonathan told David of his father's wicked purpose, and said he would

talk with him, and see what he could do to turn his anger away.

So Jonathan spoke to his father about David's courage in fighting the giant, and how much he had done since in driving away their enemies, and said to him, "Wherefore wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without cause?" These words of his son had such a good effect upon Saul that his mind was changed for a time at least, and he said, "As the Lord liveth, he shall not be slain."

So David was taken back into Saul's house, and lived there peacefully until there was another war with the Philistines. Then because David gained more great victories over their enemies, Saul was angry again, and came near killing his faithful captain with his own hand.

As one of the rewards promised to David for killing the giant, Michal, Saul's daughter, had been given him for a wife. She seems to have been a kind and loving wife, for she tried in every way to shield her husband from her cruel father.

She heard one day that Saul had sent messengers to the house to kill David, so she sent him away in great haste. Then she dressed up an image, and putting a pillow of goat's hair under its head, she covered it up in David's bed.

When the messengers came she pretended that her husband was sick, and they went away for that time. Then Saul sent messengers again, and said, "Bring him up to me in the bed that I may slay him." But when they found nothing but an image lying there, Saul was very angry, and said to his daughter Michal, "Why hast thou deceived me so, and sent away mine enemy that he has escaped?" But this daughter felt that she had done right in saving her husband's life, and bravely told her father so.

David's life was now in so much danger that he fled to the house of the prophet Samuel in Naioth. In a short time he had to flee from this place also, and for years after he was hunted by Saul, who was determined that he should die.

One of David's hiding-places was a cave in Engedi. When Saul heard that he was somewhere in that wilderness, he took with him three thousand men and went to seek him there. With a few of his men he entered a cave, and it happened to be the very one where David was hiding.

The men who were with David were anxious that he should kill Saul, who had so wonderfully fallen into his hands. David did steal up to him while he was in the cave, and cut off a piece of his robe; but he felt sorry afterward for

doing even that, and said to his men, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him."

David would not suffer his men to touch Saul, and by and by when he left the cave with his soldiers, David went out and cried after him, saying, "My lord the king!" When Saul looked back, lo! there was David bowing down before him with his face to the ground. David eagerly asked the king why he had believed the stories that his men had told about him, saying, "Behold, David seeketh thy hurt." Then he showed Saul the skirt of his robe which he had just cut off. If he had been as near as that to him, and could so easily have killed him, surely Saul ought to know that he had no evil designs upon him.

These kind words touched Saul's heart so that "he lifted up his voice and wept," and he said to David, "Thou art more righteous than I; for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil." Before he finished talking with him, Saul told David that he knew that one day David would be the king of Israel; and he made David promise that he would be kind to his kindred, and not destroy Saul's name out of his father's house. Saul reigned a few

years longer as king, and all this while he was troubled by the Philistines, who were constantly making attacks upon his army.

At last, in a fierce battle on the mountains of Gilboa, Saul and his three sons, including Jonathan, were killed. David was deeply grieved about their death, and he wrote a beautiful elegy or song of mourning, in which he sang:—

“The beauty of Israel is slain upon the high places: how are the mighty fallen! Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their deaths they were not divided.”

One of Saul's sons became king for a while, but on his death David was again anointed and began his reign over the kingdom of Israel. The Philistines soon made an attack upon the new king, but they were driven back, and their idol gods in which they trusted were burned.

David now had a splendid army, with brave captains to lead it. The city of Jebus was so strongly fortified that the armies of Israel had never been able to take it. But one day Joab, the most daring of the captains, with a few brave men, climbed over the steep walls and captured the city. It was such a beautiful spot that David made it the capital of his kingdom. This place has always been known since as

Jerusalem, and called the City of David. To this city David ordered the Ark of the Covenant to be brought, and it was carried there in a solemn procession, and received with great rejoicings.

David built himself a palace in Jerusalem, and lived there in splendor, for he had great riches. When he looked upon his beautiful house, and thought how the Ark of God was still within its sacred tent or tabernacle, he felt that he ought to build a temple for it. But God told him he might gather the materials for this temple, but that his son Solomon was the chosen one to build it.

At times during his life David forgot God and was led into grievous sins. He was always sorry afterward for his wrong-doing, and would pray earnestly to be forgiven. He says in one of his Psalms, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." The whole Psalm is a prayer that God would have mercy upon him.

He had a favorite son whose name was Absalom, who caused his father much sorrow. Absalom wanted to be king in his father's stead, and tried in every way to win the love of the people. He was so kind to them in many ways, that at

last he stole their hearts, and having raised a large army he had himself proclaimed king.

Of course this was treason, a high crime against the government, and David would not permit even the son he loved so much to do such a wicked thing; so an army was sent out to capture him.

Absalom was very pleasing in appearance. It is said of him, "in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty; from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him." His hair was long and heavy and of great beauty.

When King David sent his army against his son, he told the captains that if Absalom was captured not to do him any harm, but to spare his life. "Deal gently," he said, "for my sake, with the young man Absalom."

The battle took place in the woods, and as Absalom was riding upon his mule under one of the trees, his long hair was caught in the branches, and the mule went away leaving him hanging there. Here he was found by Joab, the chief captain of David's army, who disobeyed the king's command, and shot Absalom through the heart with arrows.

David was filled with sorrow for the loss of his son, even if his army had gained a great

victory. It is said he went up to his chamber and wept, crying out:—

“O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!”

David mourned so long and so bitterly for his son, that the people felt he was doing wrong. Joab, his chief captain, said to him one day, that he seemed to love his enemies more than his friends. His army had put an end to Absalom's wicked plan to get the kingdom, and instead of being grateful to them he was mourning all the while for his son. David saw how selfishly he was behaving, and, putting off the signs of grief which he wore, he went and sat again in the gate, where the people could see and talk with him. There was great rejoicing all over the land when the king returned to his home in Jerusalem, and went out and in as he used to do, before his son Absalom turned against him.

David had a large and powerful army, and some of the soldiers were so wonderfully brave that they were called his mighty men. They all loved their king, and three of these mighty men one day put their lives in deadly peril in order to serve him. David had gone with his army to fight the Philistines, and had gained a

great victory over them, but a troop of them were still in Bethlehem, where David had lived when he was a shepherd boy. He was tired and thirsty, and longed for a drink of cool water from the well that was near his old home. He cried out, "O that some one would give me to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate."

Three of David's mighty men heard this wish, and ran with all haste, and breaking through the ranks of the Philistines, they brought to David the water which he so longed for. But the king would not drink it after all, because these men had almost lost their lives in getting it. Instead he poured it out upon the ground as a sort of thank offering to the Lord.

When David became an old man his sons were each of them looking forward to being king of Israel when he should pass away. But David had chosen his son Solomon to wear his crown, and one day he ordered Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet to place Solomon upon his own mule, and bring him to Gibeon. They did as the king commanded, and the priest took some of the sacred oil out of the tabernacle and anointed him. They blew the trumpet when the ceremony was ended, and all the people shouted, "God save King Solomon!"

They were very glad that this good son of David was henceforth to be their king. The people piped with pipes, and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth shook with the sound of them.

As David was about to die, he gave Solomon a parting message. He said to him: "I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong, therefore, and show thyself a man. And keep the charge of the Lord thy God to walk in his ways, to keep his commandments, that thou mayest prosper in all thy ways."

Then the Bible tells us David slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David.

He reigned over Israel forty years, and although he often sinned, yet he always was sorry for his sins, and humbly asked to be forgiven. With all his faults we think of King David as the "sweet palmist of Israel" and "the man after God's own heart."

KING SOLOMON THE WISE

SOLOMON, who was made king just before his father's death, was David's youngest son. His father had always been a man of war. From the day in which he killed Goliath the giant, until his death, he had been fighting the enemies of Israel. He was quite an old man when his youngest son was born; and as he was tired of war and fighting, and wanted the child to live a different life, he named him Solomon, which means peaceful.

The people received their new king with joy, and there was peace and quiet all through the land. Solomon wished to make friends with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and so he married the king's daughter. Pharaoh gave her a city on the borders of the land of Israel for a wedding gift. She was received with honor as princess of Egypt, and Solomon built for her a new and beautiful palace outside the walls of the city.

Solomon kept up the religious worship which had been taught him by his father, and one day, as he was making a sacrifice of a thousand burnt

offerings at Gibeon, the Lord appeared to him in a dream, and a voice said, "Ask what I shall give thee."

Solomon replied that, although God had given him the throne of his father David, yet he said, "I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in."

The people over whom he was to reign had become great and powerful, and he felt that he was not fit to rule them, so he prayed, "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?"

This wish of Solomon pleased the Lord, and he not only gave him the wisdom which he asked for, but with it great riches and honor. Solomon was assured that he would be wiser than any man who had ever lived before him, or that should ever come after him, and among all the kings there should be none like him.

When Solomon awoke after this wonderful dream, he felt that God had indeed talked with him. He was so grateful for the gifts that had been promised him, that he went back to Jerusalem and made there both burnt offerings and peace offerings. As he wanted others to share in his gladness, he made a feast for his servants.



THE JUDGMENT OF SOLOMON.

From a painting by Veronese.

Not long after this Solomon had occasion to use the wisdom which he had just received from God.

Two women came to him one day in great trouble. One of them said to him: "We both live together in one house, and we each of us had a little son of the same age. The woman who is with me lay over upon her child one night and killed it. As soon as she found it was dead, she took my child from me, and placed her dead son in my arms."

The woman thus accused said, "Nay, but the living is my son, and the dead is thy son."

Both claimed the living child, and so King Solomon told one of his servants to bring him a sword. When it was brought the king said to the servant, "Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other."

At these words, the real mother cried out, "O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it;" but the other woman said, "Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it." Solomon was quite sure now which was the true mother, and he said, "Give her the living child, and in no wise slay it: she is the mother thereof."

The people heard with wonder of this wise

judgment of the king, and they saw that the wisdom of God had indeed been given him.

Solomon's kingdom was even greater than his father's, and he lived in more splendor than any of the kings about him. He owned many splendid chariots, and he had forty thousand horses to draw them, and twelve thousand horsemen to care for them. The fame of his riches and his wisdom went everywhere among all the nations.

He loved to study the works of God, and he knew all about trees and plants, from the great cedars of Lebanon to the little vines that grew upon the walls. It was said that he knew the language in which the beasts talked with each other, and that he could tell all about the fowls and the creeping things and the fishes.

Besides all this, he could write out his wise thoughts for others to read. He made three thousand proverbs, and some of them we can read in the "Book of Proverbs" which we find in the Bible. He also wrote more than a thousand poems or songs. One of them we have in the Bible, and it is called the "Song of Solomon."

The kingdom of Tyre was not far from the borders of Israel, and Hiram the king of Tyre was always a great friend and lover of King David.

So when he heard that Solomon had been made king, he sent him a kind greeting.

Solomon returned a pleasant answer, and they became good friends also. Hiram knew that David had wanted to build a house for the Lord, but was forbidden to do so, because he had been a fighting man. But David had saved up a large sum of money, and a great quantity of material had been brought from Hiram's kingdom already with which to build this house.

Solomon sent word to Hiram that as soon as the rest of the material was ready, he should begin to build God's house himself. He wanted Hiram to furnish fir trees and cedar trees, and workmen to hew them and bring them to Jerusalem.

Hiram sent back this word to Solomon: "I have considered the things which thou sentest to me for: and I will do all thy desire concerning timber of cedar, and concerning timber of fir. My servants shall bring them down from Lebanon unto the sea; and I will convey them by sea in floats unto the place thou shalt appoint me, and I will cause them to be discharged there, and thou shalt receive them."

Solomon was much pleased with Hiram's kind answer, and he formed a league or bargain with him, that he should help him not only with mate-

rial and work for the Temple, but that they should trade in other things. In exchange for all this timber sent by the people of Tyre, they were glad to take back the grain and oil which was so plentiful in the land of Israel.

By and by Solomon built merchant ships of his own, which he sent to far-off countries, and they brought him back gold and precious stones and treasures of every kind.

Solomon had been reigning as king for four years when he began the work of building the Temple. It was to be the most splendid building in the world, so the king sent everywhere for the very best workmen. He called upon the people to furnish him with thirty thousand men. A thousand men at a time were sent to the forests of Lebanon to work for a month, and then they were allowed to stay at home for two months. Seventy thousand men did the rough work, and were called the burden bearers. Eighty thousand men were sent into the mountains to cut down the trees.

Over all these, besides the chief officers of Solomon, were set more than three thousand men to watch these workmen, and see that they performed their daily tasks right.

Great stones were brought with which to lay the foundations of the Temple. These were

taken from a quarry under the city of Jerusalem, and people who have been there tell us that the very place from which some of the stones were taken can be seen now.

It took this army of workmen seven years to build the wonderful Temple. All the inside of it was beautifully carved in flowers and fruits, and overlaid with gold.

The Holy Place for the Ark of the Covenant was also overlaid with gold, and the altar was built of cedar. There was a beautiful veil, too, to divide it from the rest of the house.

Solomon caused a great basin to be made for holding the water used by the priests in the temple service. It was so large that they called it a molten sea, and this basin stood upon the backs of twelve golden oxen.

All the vessels that were used in the Temple, the pots and the pans, the bowls and the spoons, were made of pure gold. There was but one candlestick in the tabernacle, but Solomon made ten golden ones for the Temple, five to stand on one side, and five on the other side, of the oracle. Even the hinges of the doors were made of gold, and the whole temple glittered in the sun like a golden mountain.

When the Temple was finished, the chiefs of all the tribes of Israel went up to Jerusalem to

help in carrying the Ark of the Covenant into the Holy Place which had been built for it.

As soon as King Solomon had done offering a sacrifice before it, the priests and the Levites took up the Ark and carried it into the Temple, and set it under the wings of two gold cherubim which Solomon had placed there. They were so large that their outspread wings nearly covered the Ark.

In this sacred chest they still found the two tables of stone which Moses had received from God's hand when he went to talk with him on Mount Sinai.

As soon as the priests had left the Holy Place, the glory of God filled it in the form of a cloud. This was so bright that the priests could not stand before it to perform their services.

Then Solomon stood forth in all his royal robes, and when he had blessed the people, he spread his hands toward heaven and made a solemn prayer, giving to the Lord the house which he had built. He asked that God would still dwell there and from that place would always hear the cry of his people when they called to him.

After the prayer was ended, Solomon and all the people made a sacrifice unto the Lord, of twenty-two thousand oxen and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep. In this way they offered

their new and beautiful Temple to the service of the Lord.

Then Solomon made a great feast, to which the people came from all over the land, and it lasted many days. On the eighth day he sent the people away, and they went to their tents, glad and joyful of heart for all the goodness of the Lord to Israel.

After a while the Lord appeared again a second time to Solomon, as he did at Gibeon when he first became king. This time the appearance was for warning. God said to him that if he obeyed his commands and walked in the ways of David his father, then he would live a prosperous life, and his kingdom would last for a long time. But if he lived a wicked life, and went after the strange gods of the heathen people around him, then God would forsake him, and his kingdom would come to an end.

King Solomon grew more rich and powerful as time went on; and his ships sailed to the unknown land of Ophir, and brought him from there at one time four hundred and twenty talents of gold.

Tidings of the splendor in which this wise king of Israel lived came to the ears of the queen of Sheba, whose dominions were in the land of Arabia.

She wanted to see for herself if all these wonderful stories which she had heard were true, so she started upon her long journey to Jerusalem, with a very great train. She wanted to make Solomon a costly present, so we are told that the "camels bare spices, and very much gold and precious stones."

When the queen was shown into Solomon's presence, she asked him many hard questions, and he was able to answer every one of them correctly. When she saw Solomon's beautiful palace, and the splendid Temple which he had built for the worship of God, and when she saw the rich clothing that even his servants wore, and the attendance of his ministers upon him, she was astonished. She said to the king; "It was a true report that I heard in mine own land, of thy acts, and of thy wisdom. Behold the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard."

The queen's present to King Solomon was a hundred and twenty talents of gold and costly spices a great store, and precious stones. Solomon never again received such an abundance of rich spices as the queen of Sheba brought him.

Solomon gave her a generous present in return, and she went away to her own land full of wonder at what she had seen.

Solomon wanted as costly a throne as any king in the world, so he ordered one made of ivory, and this he overlaid with gold. He made six steps that led up to this throne, and at the end of each step was a lion, so there were twelve lions that seemed to guard any approach to the king. There was nothing like this to be found in any other kingdom.

The Bible tells us that King Solomon exceeded the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom ; and all the earth sought to Solomon to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart.

Before he had finished the building of the Temple he began a magnificent house for himself, and it was thirteen years in building. It cost a great deal of money to build such rich and costly houses. The people were taxed to pay for them, and they began to weary of such burdens. King Solomon also forgot to walk in God's ways, and disobeyed him in taking many strange wives from the heathen people around him.

By and by he began to worship the idol gods which these wives believed in, and he built altars for their worship on many of the hills about Jerusalem. The prophets of God and the priests who served in the temple were full of sorrow at this conduct of their king. The

prophets spoke out boldly against these wicked acts, and the people soon grew restless and quarrelsome.

Solomon saw that he was losing favor with them, and tried in every way to get back their good opinion. The nations around soon heard of the trouble in Solomon's kingdom, and began to make attacks upon him.

The king had left off serving God for so many years and had led such a riotous and wilful life, that he became an old man in appearance when he ought to have been full of life and vigor. In one of the books which he wrote, which is called Ecclesiastes in the Bible, he speaks of the vanity of this life. He wanted to warn the young against walking in his ways, and he says to them in this book:—

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.”

Solomon reigned as king of Israel for forty years in Jerusalem, and he must have been sorry for the foolish manner in which he spent so many of the last years of his life.

He ends his book of good advice to the young by saying, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”

ELIJAH AND ELISHA

MANY of the evils which the prophets of God said would befall the people of Israel, if they forgot him and served other gods, came to pass after King Solomon's death. The twelve tribes quarrelled among themselves, and ten of them rebelled against Rehoboam, who was made king after Solomon. These tribes chose Jeroboam for their king, and he proved to be a bad man. He not only worshipped idols himself, but he made his people worship them also. There was war and strife in the land during all the years in which these two kings reigned, and there was never a king after Solomon who ruled over all the tribes of Israel. Most of these kings were evil men, and followed the example of the king of the rebel tribes, who is always spoken of in the Bible as "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin."

The worst of these bad kings was Ahab, who added to his wrong-doing by taking Jezebel, a heathen woman, for a wife. She was the daughter of the king of Zidon, and worshipped

Baal, the idol god of her people. She soon made Ahab build altars for his worship in the land of Israel, and they appointed hundreds of priests to serve in the worship and offer the sacrifices. Sometimes human victims were burned upon Baal's altars, while the worshippers during the dreadful scene would dance around, cutting themselves with knives and howling as if they were mad people.

Far away in the mountains of Gilead lived Elijah the Tishbite. His home was among the Bedouin Arabs, but he had heard in some way of the God of Israel and had learned to worship and serve him. He was chosen as a prophet to carry God's message to the people who had so sadly gone astray.

One day Ahab suddenly met this strange prophet from the mountains. His long hair fell about his shoulders, and his only clothing was a girdle made of skins, which he drew tightly around him when he wished to walk or run. He carried with him a mantle made of skins, with which he sometimes covered his face.

This fierce-looking man ran swiftly towards Ahab, and boldly cried out, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these three years, but according to my word."

It is quite likely that Ahab told Jezebel of this strange meeting with a new prophet and of the message which he gave. It may be it was at this time that she gave the order for all the prophets of Israel's God to be slain. Elijah's life must have been in danger, for the word of the Lord came to him bidding him hide by the brook Cherith. The prophet went there as he was ordered, and every day the ravens brought him bread and meat to eat both morning and evening. His drink was the water of the brook, but as there had been no rain for a long time it soon dried away.

But God did not forget his faithful prophet, and his word came to him, saying, "Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there; behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee."

When Elijah reached Zarephath he found a woman gathering sticks near the gate of the city. He was tired and thirsty from his long journey and called out to her, "Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink." As she was going for the water he said, "Bring me a morsel of bread in thine hand."

The woman was almost too astonished to speak, for there was such a grievous famine in the land that there was scarcely any bread left.

She said to Elijah, "As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, only a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die." That was all the food she had left, and when that was gone she and her son must starve.

Elijah told her not to fear, but go and make the cake as she had said; however, to make one for him first and bring it to him, and afterward she might make one for herself and her son.

The woman must have thought this was a strange and selfish request, but when the prophet added, "For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth," her heart must have been filled with joy.

She trusted the Lord so fully that she went and did as Elijah directed her, and he stayed there with her many days. And the Bible tells us that "the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord by Elijah."

One day while the prophet was a guest at this woman's house her son was taken very ill, and in a short time he died. In her sorrow the

mother thought that it might be "the man of God," as she called Elijah, was in some way the cause of her child's death.

Elijah wanted to comfort and reassure her, and so he kindly said to her, "Give me thy son." The prophet carried the dead child up to his own room and laid him upon his bed. Then, when he had prayed earnestly unto the Lord, he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried out again in prayer, "O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come to him again." We are told that the Lord heard the voice of Elijah, and the soul of the child came into him again and he revived.

We can imagine with what delight the mother received him when Elijah brought him down from his chamber, and placing him in her arms said, "See, thy son liveth." We cannot wonder that she exclaimed, "Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth."

The famine continued for three years as Elijah had said, and near the close of the last year, the word of the Lord came to him, and he was commanded, "Go show thyself to Ahab; and I will bring rain upon the earth."

The famine was so dreadful everywhere that

the horses and cattle were in danger of dying of hunger and thirst, so Ahab and Obadiah went each to different parts of the land to see if there was not somewhere grass enough to save the poor creatures' lives.

While Obadiah was upon this errand Elijah met him, and he knew the prophet at once, and falling upon his face before him said, "Art thou my lord Elijah?"

The prophet answered, "I am; go tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here."

But Obadiah was afraid to do this, for the prophet went so swiftly from one place to another, that Ahab might come to meet him and find he had gone away again. He would think then that Obadiah had told him a falsehood, and perhaps would slay him.

But Elijah said, "As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself to him to-day." Obadiah believed these solemn words and went directly and gave the prophet's message to Ahab. The king had been seeking Elijah everywhere, and he was glad of the chance to go out and meet him. His heart was bitter against him, for he blamed him for the famine that had so distressed the people. "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" he asked in an angry voice.

Elijah boldly answered, "I have not troubled Israel; but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim."

Then Elijah commanded him to gather all Israel to Mount Carmel, and with them must come the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal that Jezebel kept for the service of her god, and whom she daily fed from her table.

Ahab did as the prophet directed, and a great company of people, including the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, gathered upon the mountain.

Elijah stood forth and said to the crowds before him: "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him."

This was a fair question, but the people answered him not a word. The time to prove which was the true God had come, and Elijah said to the people, "I, even I, only remain of the prophets of the Lord, but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men."

Then he told them to bring him two bullocks, and Baal's prophets might choose whichever one they wished; this they were to kill and dress and lay upon the altar where the wood had been

made ready for the sacrifice, but no fire must be put under it.

Elijah said that he would prepare the other bullock in the same way, and put no fire under it. The prophets of Baal might call upon their god, and he would call upon the God of Israel, and the one who should answer by sending fire from heaven, should be known as the true God.

The people were all pleased with this plan and said, "It is well spoken." The prophets of Baal prepared their altar, and after laying the bullock upon it, they cried all day unto their god. From morning until night they cried, "O Baal, hear us." They became almost frantic because no answer came, and wildly jumped upon the altar.

Elijah, who was standing by, said to them in a mocking voice, "Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked."

This made them more angry and excited, and they not only cried the louder, but they cut their flesh with knives and lancets, and made themselves hideous by the blood which flowed from their wounds.

When evening came and no answer had been

given by Baal, Elijah commanded the people to come near to him. Then taking twelve stones, one for each of the tribes of Israel, he built an altar in the name of the Lord, and made a trench all around it. Then he placed the wood upon the altar, and on it he laid the bullock which he had cut in pieces. Over all this he poured water. He told those who were helping him in this work to do it for the second and third times, and the water thus freely poured out ran all about the altar and filled the trench.

When the time for the evening sacrifice had come and all was ready, Elijah drew near the altar and made this prayer: "Lord God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again."

Then a most wonderful thing happened. Fire fell from heaven, and not only consumed all the burnt sacrifice, but the wood and the dust and even the stones, and it licked up the water that was in the trench about the altar.

When the people saw it they were filled with

astonishment and fear, and fell upon their faces, crying out, "The Lord, he is God; The Lord, he is God."

Then Elijah told the people to seize these wicked prophets of Baal, and take them away to the brook Kishon, and slay them.

There had been no rain for three years, just as Elijah had said. He knew that God's promise was sure, and so, at the close of the last year, he sent word to Ahab that "there was the sound of an abundance of rain."

The prophet went again upon Mount Carmel, where the fire from God had so wonderfully fallen, and there waited for some sign of the rain. He sent his servant out to watch the sky, and look towards the sea for a cloud. He soon came back with the words, "There is nothing." But Elijah had strong faith and believed that what God had promised he would surely perform, and so he bade the servant go seven times more. At the seventh time he came back with the message that "a little cloud was rising out of the sea, like a man's hand."

Elijah sent word to Ahab that he must prepare his chariot and hasten away, or he might be stopped by the rain. The sky soon grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. All the people must have believed

that there was a God in Israel and that he had spoken to them through his prophet Elijah.

When Jezebel was told of the scene upon Mount Carmel, and of what had happened to the prophets of Baal, she was very angry and sent a message to Elijah that she would take his life also. The prophet seemed strangely afraid of the threat of this wicked woman, and fled to Beersheba. Leaving his servant there, he went a whole day's journey away into the wilderness, and, faint and weary, he sat down under a juniper tree. He was so tired that he lost his courage for a while, and cried out, almost in despair, "It is enough: now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am no better than my fathers."

At last the poor weary prophet fell asleep, and as he lay there under the juniper tree, an angel awoke him and said to him, "Arise and eat." Elijah may have thought at first that nothing could be found to eat away off there in the wilderness. But as he looked about him, lo! there was a cake that had been baked upon the coals, and a cruse of water near his head.

He ate of the food thus provided for him, and sank down to sleep again. The angel once more awoke him and told him to eat again, for he had

been on a long journey and needed the strength which the food would give him. Elijah found the words of the angel true, and the food sustained him many days.

Once again, when Elijah became discouraged as he thought how many idol worshippers there were in Israel, and how few prophets were left, he was comforted and cheered by God's word to him. He assured the prophet that all the people had not left off serving him, for there were seven thousand men yet who had never bowed their knees to Baal.

Elijah needed a helper in his work as a prophet, and God sent him to find Elisha, the son of Shaphat. This man was ploughing in his field when Elijah came to him and threw upon his shoulders the mantle which he carried. By this sign Elisha knew that he was to follow the prophet and become his assistant.

Elijah lived yet for many years, and when the time came for him to depart he was taken to heaven in a wonderful manner. One day Elijah told Elisha that he had been directed by the Lord to go to the river Jordan, and Elisha wishing to go also they went on together. As they wanted to cross the river Elijah took off his mantle, and wrapping it together into a sort of staff, he smote the waters and they divided,

so that they passed the bed of the river on dry land.

Elijah knew that he must soon leave his friend, and he said to him, "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee." And Elisha said, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." We shall see hereafter how this good wish seemed to have been granted him.

As they were walking along together, suddenly a chariot of fire appeared, and horses of fire, and the two prophets were parted from each other, and the Bible tells us that "Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."

When Elisha saw his master leave him in this manner, he cried out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" After he could see Elijah no more, he rent his clothes in two pieces to show his great sorrow. Picking up the mantle which Elijah had dropped, he went back to the river Jordan; and wishing to return to the opposite bank, he used the mantle in the same way Elijah had done, and lo! as he smote the waters they divided, and he went over the bed of the river as before.

There was a school of the prophets at Jericho, near where Elisha crossed the Jordan,

and the students were called the "sons of the prophets." When they saw what Elisha had done with the mantle of his master, they said to one another, "The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha." And as they came to meet him they bowed themselves to the ground before him. They, too, loved the prophet who had so suddenly gone from them, and they wanted Elisha to send them in search of him. They thought the Spirit of God might have taken him to some other place. Elisha refused them at first, but when they urged him so earnestly he at last consented. Fifty of these young men searched for the prophet for three days, and then they came back to Elisha with the sorrowful tidings that he was nowhere to be found.

The water from the springs near Jericho which supplied the city was very bad, and the land about the springs was quite barren. One day Elisha took a water cruse, filled it with salt, and poured it into the spring. Then turning to the people standing near, he said, "Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not thence be any more death nor barren land."

As Elisha went from thence towards Bethel he met a band of children coming out from the

city. He had probably taken off for a time the covering which he usually wore, and thus showed his bare head, from which the hair had fallen. These wicked children thought this a matter for fun, and, mocking him, called out, "Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head."

Elisha turned and looked back upon them, and the Bible says "he cursed them in the name of the Lord." Their punishment was swift and sudden, for two bears came upon them from the wood, and forty-two of these children were torn in pieces.

Although he was stern when reproofing wrong-doers, yet Elisha had a kind heart, and was always willing to help any one in trouble.

One day the widow of one of the sons of the prophets came to him with a sad story. A man to whom her husband owed money now threatened to take her two sons and make them his slaves in payment for the debt.

Elisha kindly listened to her story, and then asked her, "What shall I do for thee? Tell me, what hast thou in the house?"

The woman sadly replied, "Thine handmaid hath not a thing in the house, save a pot of oil."

Elisha told her to go and call upon her neighbors and borrow of them a large number of empty oil vessels. After she had done this he told her that she and her sons must shut themselves up in the house, and pour into the borrowed vessels the contents of their own oil pot.

Whatever the woman thought of this strange command, she did just as Elisha told her. She kept pouring into the empty vessels until there were no more to fill. With a glad heart she went with the good news to Elisha, and he said to her, "Go sell the oil and pay thy debt, and live, thou and thy children, upon the rest."

We may be quite sure that this widow remembered Elisha with gratitude all her life.

The prophet often made long journeys as he walked from place to place. One day as, weary and footsore, he was passing through Shunem, a kind woman there asked him to stop and eat a morsel of bread with them. He was glad to do so, and afterward whenever he came that way the prophet used to stop there for rest and refreshment. The woman became much attached to the kind old man, and one day she said to her husband: "Behold, I perceive that this is a holy man of God which passeth by us continually. Let us make a little chamber, I

pray thee, upon the wall, and let us set for him there a bed and a table and a stool and a candlestick; and it shall be when he cometh to us he shall turn in thither."

The little chamber was prepared as the woman had planned, and Elisha often found it a haven of rest after a long and weary journey.

This woman had one son, an only child, and one day as he was out in the field with his father he was overcome by the heat, and his father carried him home and laid him in his mother's arms, and in a few hours he died.

The first thought of the mother was to go and tell Elisha of her great sorrow. So she saddled an ass, and with her servant sped as swiftly as the animal would carry her to Mount Carmel. Elisha happened to be looking that way, and saw the woman coming hastily toward him. She ran to meet him, and falling down before him, she eagerly grasped his feet. Gehazi, Elisha's servant, tried to thrust her away, but the prophet said, "Let her alone, for her soul is vexed within her."

When the poor woman had poured into his ear the story of her grief, Elisha bade Gehazi take the prophet's staff and go as quickly as

possible to Shunem, and lay it upon the face of the child. But the mother wanted Elisha himself to go, and she said, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee," so the prophet arose and followed her.

When Elisha reached Shunem he found the dead child lying upon his own bed in the prophet's chamber. He shut himself within and prayed earnestly to the Lord for the life of the child. Then he stretched himself upon him, as Elisha had done to the widow's son, and after a while the flesh grew warm, and the life blood began to flow again. After sneezing seven times he opened his eyes, and was once again a living child. When Elisha called his mother and she saw the wonderful thing that had happened, she fell at the prophet's feet to show her gratitude, and clasping her little son in her arms, she went away with a happy heart.

The tidings of these miracles which Elisha performed spread to other countries, and Naaman, the captain of the Syrian army, came one day to the prophet to be cured of his leprosy. This was a dreadful disease for which there was no remedy. Naaman heard of the prophet through a little servant girl, who had been brought to Syria as a captive from the land of Israel. Elisha told the captain to go

and wash seven times in the river Jordan, and he would be healed of his leprosy. Naaman was indignant at this command. Why should he be told to wash in that little muddy river, when the rivers of Damascus, where he lived, were so much larger and cleaner? He was going away in anger, when his servant urged him to do as the prophet wished. He said: "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather then when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean."

Naaman then went down and dipped himself seven times in the river Jordan, as Elisha had bidden him, and lo! as he came out the seventh time his flesh was as fresh and pure as that of a little child.

The Syrian captain wanted to pay Elisha for healing him, but the prophet refused, and said to him, "As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none."

Naaman was so grateful to the God of Israel, through whose prophet he had been healed, that he promised never again to worship or sacrifice to any other god. Elisha was pleased to hear of Naaman's good resolve, and bade him "Go in peace."

Elisha lived to a good old age, and was

loved and trusted as God's faithful messenger to his people. Joash, who was the king of Israel at the time, went to see him in his last sickness, and when he died he wept over him, and buried him with honor.

QUEEN ESTHER

IN the beautiful palace of Shushan in Persia king Ahasuerus made a feast unto his princes. The kingdom of this monarch was a large one, for he ruled over a hundred and twenty-seven provinces.

The most noted men of Media and Persia, and all the nobles and princes of these provinces, were bidden to this feast.

The banquet hall of the palace where it was held was richly and gorgeously furnished. Its walls were hung around with white and green and blue hangings. These were fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble.

The guests who were invited to a feast in those Eastern lands never sat at the table in chairs, but reclined upon couches as they ate. The beds or couches in the banquet hall of Ahasuerus were of gold and silver, and they stood upon a mosaic pavement of red, and blue, and black, and white marble. The table was laid with golden dishes, and the drinking vessels

were of many different patterns and all were of gold.

In another part of the palace Vashti the queen gave a feast to the women who belonged in the royal house.

The feast of Ahasuerus lasted a long time, and by the seventh day the king was merry with having drunk so much wine, and became bold and reckless. Calling the seven chamberlains who served in his presence, he bade them go and tell Vashti the queen to put on her royal robes and her queenly crown, and come to his feast. He wanted to show his princely guests the grace and beauty of the queen of Persia.

Now, women were never permitted in those days to see or converse with any men except those of their own family. Queen Vashti heard this request of the king with horror. How could she appear before these strange men, who were even then holding a drunken revel? It was not to be thought of, and so she refused to come at the king's commandment.

The monarch was astonished when he received the queen's answer, and "his anger burned in him." He sent for the wise men of his kingdom, who knew all about law and judgment, and said to them, "What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because she hath

not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus by his chamberlains?"

One of the wise men replied thus to his question:—

"Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes and to all the people that are in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus. For this deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all the women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not."

This disobedience of the queen, he thought, should be punished, so this wise man said, "If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, That Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another."

Whenever this decree should be heard throughout Persia, all the wives of the kingdom would "give to their husbands honor, both to great and small."

The king was so pleased with this advice that he adopted it at once, and Vashti was sent from her beautiful palace home in disgrace.

Among those who were in the employ of the king about his palace was Mordecai, a Jew, who sat in the king's gate. He was a captive that had been brought there from Jerusalem, and Esther his orphan cousin he brought up in his house, the same as if she had been his daughter.

Now, when the time came for the king to choose another queen in the place of Vashti, he sent all over the kingdom for the fairest young women to be brought to the palace. Among them came Esther, and Mordecai charged her not to tell that she was a Jewess, or let any one know that she was a captive from Jerusalem.

The king sent each day for one of these young maidens to come before him, and when Esther's turn came, she was so fair and beautiful that the king was more pleased with her than with any of the others; and it is said that she "obtained favor in the sight of all them that looked upon her."

The king loved her so well that he placed the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti. He ordered a great wedding feast for the bride, which was called Esther's feast. The king made it a time of rejoicing by giving many prisoners their freedom, and sending royal gifts to his friends.

Mordecai was pleased that Esther had found such favor with the king, and that she had kept so faithfully the secret of her birth.

One day while Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, he overheard Bigthan and Teresh, two of the chamberlains, lay a plot to do the king harm. These men were among those who guarded the door of the palace, and for some reason they had become angry with king Ahasuerus, and threatened to lay violent hands upon him.

As soon as Mordecai had the chance he told Esther of what he had heard, and she contrived that the news should be carried to the king in Mordecai's name. The king caused the matter to be looked into, and these men were found guilty and both of them were hanged; and an account of the affair was written in the book of chronicles which was kept for the king.

Among the great men at the court of Ahasuerus was Haman, the Agagite, as he was called. This man was vain and ambitious, and when the king set him above all his princes he was filled with pride. Haman enjoyed having all the king's servants bow down before him and do him reverence. But there was one man who would not bow to him, or show him any attention, and that was Mordecai the

Jew, who sat erect in the gate every day as Haman passed by. The king's servants noticed the slight which Mordecai put upon Haman, and they asked him, "Why transgressest thou the king's commandment?" and they kept on asking this question every day. When these servants found that it did no good to speak to Mordecai about the matter, they went to Haman and told him that Mordecai, who treated him so ill, was a Jew, one of the captives from Jerusalem.

At first Haman thought that he would find some way to arrest Mordecai alone, but afterward he formed the plan to destroy all the Jewish people in the king's dominions.

Haman chose a favorable time in which to speak to the king, and said to him, "There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws; therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them." Haman promised the king that if he would give a written order for these people to be destroyed, he would pay ten thousand talents of silver into the treasury of the king.

This seemed to the king to be a fair story and a good offer from Haman. Surely if these people,

whoever they were, had laws of their own and were disobeying his laws, they ought to be punished. So the king took off his signet ring and gave it to Haman, and bade him carry out his plan.

The scribes of the kingdom were hastily called, and letters were written by them to the governors of all the provinces, and to the rulers of every people in every province; and so that no one might fail to read them, these letters were written in all the different languages of the people.

These were all sent in the king's name, and sealed with his ring. They were carried by posts into all the king's provinces, and soon it was known that it was the purpose of Ahasuerus "to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both old and young, little children and women."

All this dreadful work must be done in one day, on the thirteenth day of the month Adar. All their clothing, their silver and gold, and, in fact, everything belonging to these Jews, was to be given to their captors. The people of every province were warned to be ready for this day, and the postmen were commanded by the king to make as much haste as possible in carrying their dreadful message.

Haman's wicked heart was filled with joy at

the success of his plot, and the king felt that he had done a good thing for his kingdom; so it is not surprising that they sat down to drink wine and have a merry time together.

When Mordecai heard the news, he was filled with astonishment and grief, and not only rent his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, but went out into the midst of the city, and "cried out with a loud and bitter cry."

Queen Esther's maids told her of Mordecai's sorrow, and she was much surprised and grieved. Shut up in the women's apartments in the palace she had heard nothing of the king's command concerning her people. She kindly sent clothing to Mordecai, that he might take off the sackcloth and cease his mourning; but he refused to do this, and still sat at the gate in his soiled garments.

Then Esther called Hatach, one of the chamberlains whom the king had appointed to attend upon her, and sent him to Mordecai to find out what it was that was troubling him, and why he was so filled with grief.

And Mordecai told Hatach all that had happened unto him, and of the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the treasury for the destruction of the Jews. He gave Hatach a copy of the king's decree, and told

him to give it into Esther's hands and charge her that she must go in and beg of the king to spare the lives of her people.

When Esther had heard Hatach's report, she sent him back to tell Mordecai that it would cost her life if she did as he commanded. It was a rigid law of the king that no one could enter his presence unless sent for and invited to speak by his holding out to them his golden sceptre. She also bade Hatach to tell Mordecai that it had now been thirty days since she had been sent for by the king, and she dared not disobey the king's laws.

Mordecai sent back this answer to Esther: "Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews." He also told her that, if she held her peace at this time, her people might be delivered in some other way, but she herself would be destroyed. He added, "And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Perhaps for this very reason she might have been raised up to be the queen of Persia.

Esther was a true woman, and loved her country and her kindred, and so she returned this brave answer to Mordecai:—

"Go, gather together all the Jews that are at present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and

neither eat nor drink three days, night or day : I also and my maidens will fast likewise ; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law ; and if I perish, I perish."

Mordecai gladly went and did as Esther requested, and the Jews in their homes, and the queen in her palace, kept the solemn fast. At the end of the third day Esther put on her royal robes, and with a trembling step perhaps, but surely with a brave heart, she went and stood in the court of the king's house. As the monarch saw her standing there, she found favor in his eyes, and he graciously held out to her the golden sceptre.

As she stepped forward to the throne and touched the top of the sceptre, the king kindly asked : " What wilt thou, Queen Esther ? and what is thy request ? It shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom."

Esther replied, " If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him."

The king was well pleased to accept her invitation, and bade Haman to make haste that he too might attend this banquet.

As they were reclining there and sipping their wine, the king asked Esther, " What is thy petition ? and it shall be granted thee : and what is

thy request? even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed."

Esther answered that, if the king and Haman would come again the next day to her banquet, she would then ask for the favor she wished.

The king graciously accepted the queen's invitation for himself and Haman, and the latter went out with a glad heart, only that at the gate there still sat Mordecai the Jew, the one man who dared refuse to honor him.

Haman hastened home, and calling his wife and friends about him, he told them of the great honor that had been shown him. The king had already promoted him, and set him above all the princes of the kingdom, and now Esther, the queen, had chosen him, only, to sit with the king at her banquet on the morrow. Yet Haman was not satisfied, and peevishly said, "All this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."

Then Zeresh, his wife, told him of a plan for getting rid of his enemy, and all his friends approved of it. She said, "Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high, and to-morrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon: then go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet."

Haman thought that this was indeed a good plan, and he went immediately, and ordered the gallows put up in his own house.

That night the king was restless and uneasy, and as he could not sleep, he ordered the book of chronicles to be brought in and read to him. As the reader went on he came to the record that told how Mordecai had given timely warning to the king of a plot against his life.

The king asked, "What honor and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this?"

The servants answered, "There is nothing done for him."

Haman too was sleepless. Now that the gallows was all prepared, he could not rest until his enemy had been hanged upon it, so he rose in the night and went to the king's court, so as to be ready to speak with him at the earliest moment.

The king had hastily formed a plan for doing honor to Mordecai, and when his servants told him that Haman was in the court, he said to them, "Let him come in."

Surely this prime minister of his kingdom was just the one to advise him in this matter. So as soon as Haman entered his presence the king said to him, "What shall be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor?"

Haman thought to himself, "Whom would the king delight to honor more than myself?" so he answered promptly:—

"Let the royal apparel be brought, which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head: and let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal, whom the king delighteth to honor, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor."

With what fear and astonishment Haman must have heard the king's next command to him:—

"Make haste and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate; let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken."

Haman dared not disobey, so instead of being honored himself, he had to array the man he so much hated in royal robes, and take him before all the people as "the man whom the king delighteth to honor."

As soon as this mortifying service was over, Haman hastened home to tell his wife and friends

everything that had befallen him. Before he had hardly done speaking, the king's chamberlain came for him to attend the queen's banquet.

Esther was still in so much favor with the king that he asked her at this second banquet the same question as before: "What is thy petition, Queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? and it shall be performed, even to the half of the kingdom."

Then Esther answered: "If I have found favor in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request. For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen or bondwomen I had held my tongue."

The king was angry to think any one should threaten to destroy the queen or her people, and he said to Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?"

Pointing to the king's prime minister, she replied, "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman."

How the haughty man must have trembled at these words! Now his wicked plot could never be carried out, and his own life was in danger.

The king was so angry that he rose up and went into the palace garden. Haman was so

afraid of what might come to him, as a punishment, that he sprang up and began to plead for his life to the queen. In his eagerness he almost fell upon the couch where she was sitting. The king coming in at that moment was more angry than ever, to see Haman in that position.

One of the chamberlains who stood by told the king of the gallows that Haman had put up for Mordecai.

The king answered, "Hang him thereon." Only three words, but they meant death to the wicked Haman, for that night he was hanged upon the very gallows that he had prepared for the man he so much hated.

The king soon sent for Mordecai to appear before him, for Esther had told him how nearly they were related. The ring that had been taken from Haman's hand the king gave to Mordecai, and Esther set him as a sort of ruler over the house of Haman.

Although Haman could do them no more harm, yet the cruel law which he had asked the king to make might still be carried out. So Esther spoke once more to the king, and falling down at his feet, she begged him with tears to put away the mischief which he had planned for the Jews.

The king in answer graciously held out his golden sceptre, and Esther arose from her knees, with new courage in her heart. Once more she said: "If it please the king, and if I have found favor in thy sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which are in all the king's provinces. For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come upon my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?"

The king kindly granted this petition and said to Esther and Mordecai, "Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name may no man reverse."

Now, a law of the Medes and Persians could never be changed, but it was possible to prevent the evil intended by Haman in one way: by arming the Jews and bidding them to get together and kill the men who should come to kill them. This was quickly done. The good tidings that the king had issued this new order which would prevent the destruction of the Jews was carried to every province of his king-

dom as fast as possible. The postmen were sent out on horses and mules and even on camels and young dromedaries. They were commanded to hasten on their journey that no harm might come to the queen's people.

The Bible tells us that in every province and in every city wherever the king's commandment went, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day, for the life of the nation was saved.

The king gave even more honor to Mordecai than he had given to Haman. Mordecai went out from his presence, clad in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and a garment of fine linen and purple; and the city of Shushan where he lived rejoiced in his good fortune.

Mordecai proved so faithful and true, that he was promoted from one place to another, until he was next in rank to King Ahasuerus. He was not only honored in the kingdom, but he was regarded as a great and good man by the Jews, who had so much occasion to love and trust him.

The day of their deliverance has been always kept as a feast-day in memory of the good Queen Esther, who saved the lives of her people at the peril of her own.

THE STORY OF JOB

THIS story, as it is found in the Bible, is thought to be one of the oldest there, and it has in it many beautiful poems. It tells of a good man who saw a great deal of trouble and sorrow, but who loved and trusted God through it all.

The home of Job was in the land of Uz: just where that was we can never know exactly, but it was probably in Arabia or Mesopotamia. The manners and customs of the people among whom he lived show us that it was in the far East, and the scene of the story was laid in those early times when every father was a sort of ruler or prince over his own family. Job was one of these patriarchs or princes, and he was one of the richest and most honored men in the land. He lived in a tent or some sort of movable house, as all the people did then, but we may be sure it was furnished with all the comforts that such a rich man could afford.

Job had a large family of seven sons and three daughters, and they all lived near their father, and had pleasant times visiting each other. He

was rich in flocks and herds, for he had seven thousand sheep and three thousand camels and five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred asses, and a very great number of servants, so, as the Bible tells us, he was the greatest man of the East.

His sons had merry times at their houses, and they took turns in visiting one another and feasting together. Their sisters also met and ate and drank with them at their feasts. When their days of merrymaking were over, Job used to rise very early on the next morning and offer burnt offerings for them all. He was afraid they might have done wrong secretly, for he said, "It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts."

We read in the Bible that on a certain day "the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them." He is that wicked spirit that was once an angel in heaven, and when he became a sinner by disobeying God he was sent away from his beautiful home in disgrace, and has ever since been trying to make others as bad as himself.

As Satan appeared before him God said to him, "Whence comest thou?" and Satan answered, "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it."

If he had been roaming about the earth and seeing how people were living and what they were doing, surely he must have noticed Job. So God said to him, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil?"

But Satan was such an evil spirit himself he could not believe there was any real goodness of heart in others. So he replied, "Doth Job serve God for naught?" He also said that God had given Job so many blessings, and had so increased his riches, that he served him only on this account. "But put forth thy hand now," said Satan, "and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face."

We are told that Satan was permitted to try Job in this way, and God said to him, "Behold all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thy hand." He might take his family and his riches from him, but his health and his life must be spared. So as Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord his evil heart was filled with a wicked joy, that he was allowed to bring trouble and sorrow upon a good man.

One day while the children were having a feast in the house of the eldest son a messenger

came to Job with bad news. He said: "The oxen were ploughing and the asses feeding beside them: and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee."

This messenger had hardly done speaking when another came running in haste and said: "The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee."

Even while this man was speaking there came another, and his message was: "The Chaldeans made out three bands and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee."

This was not the end of the bad news, for still another messenger came, and his story was the worst of all. He said to Job: "Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking in their eldest brother's house: and behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee."

If Satan was waiting around unseen to find

out what Job would say, he heard no cursing from his lips, nor a word of complaint. Instead of that, Job rose up, and rending his mantle and shaving his head he fell down and worshipped God. He said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." We read that "in all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."

It is said that on another day the sons of God came before him, and Satan again came with them. God asked him, as before, if he had considered his servant Job, that he was still perfect and upright, although Satan had been allowed to bring such dreadful sorrows upon the good man. But Satan would not admit that there was any unselfish goodness in Job. He might bear patiently the loss of riches, and the loss of his children, but if God should send sickness upon him, he would curse God like the others, and become as bad as any one else.

So we are told that the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life."

Then Satan went out and sent upon Job a dreadful disease, which made great boils break out all over his body. They covered him from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. He was so ill from this loathsome disease that

he went away by himself and sat down among the ashes.

This last trouble was more than his wife could bear, and she wanted Job to do the very thing that Satan hoped he would do, that is, to "Curse God and die."

But Job told her she was speaking foolishly ; he said, "What, shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" So even in all this trouble Job did not "sin with his lips."

News of what had befallen him soon reached the good man's friends, and three of them — Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite — came each from the place where he lived to see him. They had agreed with each other to come together "to mourn with him and to comfort him." They pretended to feel the greatest sorrow for their sick friend, and when they were afar off, it is said, "they lifted up their voice and wept." Every one rent his mantle, and to show their deep grief they sprinkled ashes upon their heads.

When they arrived where Job was sitting they sat down with him upon the ground, and seeing how full of pain and distress he was, they sat there seven days and nights without speaking to him. This was certainly a strange way of

showing their sympathy, and Job must have become tired of their long silence.

At last he spoke to them and said he was now sorry that he had ever been born. "The thing," he said, "which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me."

Then Eliphaz spoke, and chose a very poor way to comfort his suffering friend. He tried to make Job believe that God never sent trouble and sorrow upon persons unless it was to punish them. He thought that Job must have sinned and done something very wrong, and so this loss and suffering had been sent upon him.

Job tried to convince Eliphaz that he had not knowingly done wrong. "Teach me," he said, "and I will hold my tongue, and cause me to understand wherein I have erred." He told his friend that people were not always punished as soon as they had done wrong, that God was always just in his dealings with men.

Bildad the Shuhite spoke even more harshly than Eliphaz, for he asked Job in a fault-finding way, "How long wilt thou speak these things?" and he assured him that God would not cast away a perfect man, nor help those who did evil. So of course Job must have sinned greatly to have God punish him so severely.

Job answered him in much the same way as

he did Eliphaz. He would not say that God sent trouble upon the wicked only, neither would he complain of his dealings with himself. In speaking of God, he said, "For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment."

Then the third friend, Zophar the Naamathite, spoke, and his speech was more discouraging than all the others. He not only thought that Job's present sufferings were just, but he said even worse things would befall him.

But Job still kept his faith in God's love and care. He denied that he had led an ungodly life, and said he had never gone astray from God or ceased to pray to him.

Then these three friends went over the whole matter again, and at last Eliphaz accused Job of committing dreadful crimes. His suffering and afflictions had been so great that he must have been a great sinner.

We cannot wonder that Job should say to them, "I have heard many such things; miserable comforters are ye all." Then Job went on to tell them of his manner of life before his afflictions came. He said that when he went through the streets, the young men stepped aside for him, and even aged men rose up and stood before him. Princes and nobles were silent in

his presence, because he was held in such high honor by all. Blessings were bestowed upon him, he said, "Because I delivered the poor that cried, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. I was a father to the poor."

Then Job spoke of the great change that had come upon him. Young men who once bowed before him with reverence now looked upon him with scorn. He said, "Now I am their song, yea, I am their by-word. They abhor me, and spare not to spit in my face." He cried out in his sorrow, "Oh that one would hear me, that the Almighty would answer me!"

The three friends of Job refused to speak to him any more, "because he was righteous in his own eyes."

At last Job's wish was granted, for the Bible tells us that God answered Job out of the whirlwind. No more grand or beautiful words were ever spoken. He speaks of all the wonderful works which he created, of the mountains and the valleys, and of the stars and of the constellations in the heavens. He speaks of how the rain is formed; "he maketh small the drops of water, they pour down rain according to the

vapor thereof. God thundereth marvellously with his voice: great things doeth he which we cannot comprehend: he saith to the snow, be thou on the earth, likewise to the small rain and the great rain of his strength." He speaks of the beasts of the field and of the monsters of the sea, and he gives us this wonderful description of the war-horse: —

"Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? The glory of his nostrils is terrible. He paweth in the valley and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha! and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting."

After God had done speaking of all the wonderful things which he had made, and of his gracious dealings with his earthly creatures, Job meekly replied that God had said that which he did not quite understand.

"I have heard of thee," Job said, "by the hear-

ing of the ear ; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

God forgave Job for the words of despair which he spoke in his distress, but he was much displeased with his three friends. He said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My wrath is kindled against thee and against thy two friends ; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath."

So these three men were told to take seven bullocks and seven rams to Job and offer them as a burnt offering for their sin. And God said to them, "My servant Job shall pray for you : for him will I accept."

They all did as God commanded them, and Job's prayer was answered and he was accepted.

Job had passed through great trials, but now they were all over, and God gave him back his health. Not only that, but he was made twice as rich as he was before.

Then all his friends and acquaintances who had forsaken him in his trouble came to him again, and Job's generous heart forgave them for their neglect, for they ate bread with him in his house, and he received their good wishes, and listened to their words of comfort. Each of them brought him a present of an earring of

gold and a piece of money. He had as many camels and sheep and oxen as before, and the Lord gave him other sons and daughters in place of those who had been killed; and in all the land there were no daughters fairer than those of Job.

Truly, as the Bible says, "the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning." He lived after this an hundred and forty years, and saw four generations of his children, "and he died, being old and full of days."

DANIEL AND HIS THREE FRIENDS

MANY times by the word of his prophets God had assured his people that if they forgot him and worshipped the gods of the heathen, and became wicked like them, their enemies would be allowed to attack them and their kingdom would be destroyed. They gave little heed to these warnings, and so in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, he was attacked by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, who came with his army of trained soldiers and besieged Jerusalem.

This invasion was sent as a punishment to the Jews, for we are told "The Lord gave Jehoiakim into the hands of the king of Babylon." Not only was the king carried as a captive to Babylon with many of his subjects, but some of the sacred vessels of the Temple were taken there, and put in the house of the heathen god of Nebuchadnezzar.

Some of their captives were of royal blood, so the king told one of his officers to choose from among them those who were the most

suitable to enter his service. He wanted them "to be well favored, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science." He wanted, too, such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, to whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

These young men were to be furnished with food and wine from the king's table. They were to study in the palace for three years, and at the end of that time they were expected to be ready to serve him.

Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar, and his three friends, who were named Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were the ones chosen by the king.

The head officer who had charge of these young men became much attached to Daniel, and had for him a tender love; so Daniel ventured to ask of him a favor. The meats that were furnished by the king were such as these Jewish captives had been taught were unclean. So Daniel asked the officer if he might set aside the meats given him by the king, and eat more simple food.

The officer listened kindly to his request, but told him if he allowed him to do this, he was afraid that Daniel would not be properly nour-

ished. If he became thin in flesh, and his health failed, the officer in charge would be blamed, and his life would be in danger.

Daniel was quite sure that nothing of this kind would happen, so he asked the officer to let himself and his three friends make the trial of eating simple food for ten days. At the end of that time he could compare them with those who ate of the king's meat, and he could then tell if it had done them any harm.

So these four young men ate pulse only, for their food, and drank pure water instead of wine. When the ten days of trial were ended, "their countenances appeared fairer, and fatter in flesh, than all the children that did eat of the king's meat."

Then the officer granted the request of Daniel, and their portion of meat was taken from them, and they were allowed after that to eat the food which they liked best.

God gave them wisdom, too, as well as bodily health, and when they were brought before King Nebuchadnezzar at the end of three years of study, he found there was none like them.

It is said that in all matters of wisdom and understanding, the king found them better than all the magicians and astrologers in the realm.

Not long after Daniel entered the service of Nebuchadnezzar the king had a strange dream, which made him troubled and anxious. He called for all the magicians and the wise men of his kingdom, who were supposed to know about such things, to see if they could tell what the dream meant. The king said to them, "I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream." These Chaldean wise men replied, "O king, live forever; tell thy servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation."

But the king had forgotten what it was, and he told these men that unless they could tell him the dream, and also what it meant, they should be cut in pieces and their houses destroyed. "But," he said, "if ye show the dream and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards of great honor: therefore show me the dream, and the interpretation thereof."

The Chaldeans again assured the king that if he could tell them what the dream was, they could explain its meaning. He still insisted that if they knew as much as they pretended, they could tell him the dream as well as its meaning. The Chaldeans replied, "There is not a man on the earth that can show the king's matter." They said too, "There is no king, lord, or master that

asked such things of any magician or astrologer." It was a strange and impossible thing which the king asked, and no one could show it before him but the gods, and they were not living on the earth.

The king was so angry with these men that he sent forth a decree that all the wise men of the kingdom of Babylon should be slain.

Now Daniel was known to be among these wise men, and when Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, came to take him away with the others, he asked him, "Why is the decree so hasty from the king?" Then the captain told Daniel all that had happened, and how the wise men had failed to tell the king about his dream.

Daniel went bravely in before Nebuchadnezzar, and said that if he would give him time he would show the meaning of the dream. He knew he could not do this in his own strength, so he went to his three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and asked them to pray to the God of heaven for him, that he might know the secret of the king's dream, and then they would not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. God heard and answered their prayer, for on that very night the secret was made known to Daniel in a dream. His

heart was filled with thanksgiving, and he cried out: "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever, for wisdom and might are his. I thank thee and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee, for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter."

Daniel then went in and told Arioch, the captain of the guard, not to destroy the wise men of Babylon, for he would go in and interpret the king's dream. Arioch hastened to bring Daniel before Nebuchadnezzar, for he was furiously angry that no one could be found to do what he wished. The captain said to him, "I have found a man of the captives of Judah who can make known unto the king the interpretation."

The king asked Daniel, "Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?"

Daniel replied that the secret which he asked of the astrologers and the wise men could not be told by them. "But," he said, "there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days."

Then Daniel went on to tell the king all

about his dream, which was of a great and terrible image that was made of gold and brass and iron and clay.

He explained that all these different materials of the image represented as many kingdoms, and he foretold what would become of each of them. He ended by saying that the dream was certain, and the meaning of it sure.

It is said that Nebuchadnezzar was so pleased at what had been revealed to him that he fell upon his face before Daniel in reverence, and commanded that an offering of sweet odors should be made to him. He cried out, "Of a truth it is that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret."

The king could hardly do enough for this wise young man, and he gave him many great gifts, and made him "ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon."

But Nebuchadnezzar must have soon forgotten how he had once praised the God of Israel, and placed him above all other gods, for he ordered a huge golden image to be made and set up in the plain of Dura. Then he sent word to all the princes, the governors and the captains, the judges and the treasurers, in fact, "all the

rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which he had set up."

These men all came as they were commanded, and stood there before the golden image. Then a herald came forth and cried aloud, "To you it is commanded, O people and nations and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up." And the herald added, "Whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."

The people all listened for the first sound of these different musical instruments, and then they fell down and worshipped the image of gold, all but the friends of Daniel, — Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They were the worshippers of the true God, and so would not bow down to this golden idol.

Some of the Chaldeans had been watching these three men, and they noticed their refusal to obey the king. Perhaps they were among the wise men who had failed to tell the king about his dream, and they were jealous of these Jewish captives, who with Daniel had risen to such high honor. They went directly to the king and

told him their story, and said that there were certain Jews that he had set over the affairs of his provinces who had disobeyed his commands. They said, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

Nebuchadnezzar was in a great rage when he heard this, and commanded that these men be brought instantly before him. "Is it true," he asked, "O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? Do not ye serve my gods, or worship the golden image which I have set up?"

The king gave them one more chance, and assured them that if they gave heed to his command, and worshipped the image, it would be well with them, but if they refused they should be cast into the fiery furnace; "and who," he proudly said, "is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?"

The men bravely replied: "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image thou hast set up."

Nebucháadnezzar was more angry than ever at this answer, and gave orders that the furnace should be heated seven times hotter than it was wont to be heated. Then he commanded the most mighty men in his army to bind the three men and cast them into the furnace.

The men seized their victims right there upon the plain, and binding them fast with all their clothing upon them, threw them into the midst of the furnace. It had been made so intensely hot that the flames burned the men who were doing this dreadful work. But it did no harm to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who fell bound into the flames.

The king was so astonished that he called out to know if these men had really been put into the furnace as he directed, and his counsellors answered, "True, O king." Then he said, "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

The king himself came near to the furnace, and cried out to the men whom he saw there, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither."

As these men stepped from the furnace all the people could see that no harm had come

to them; their hair was not singed, and their clothing was not even scorched.

Nebuchadnezzar said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him." And he made a decree that every people, nation, and language which spoke anything amiss against the God of these men should be cut in pieces and their houses be laid waste. "Because," he said, "there is no other God that can deliver after this sort."

After this Nebuchadnezzar had another strange dream. He saw a tree standing in the midst of the earth whose height was very great. And while he looked the tree grew larger and its branches higher until its top reached to heaven. The leaves of the tree were beautiful, and it bore rich fruit that was meat for all. The beasts of the field gathered under its shade, and the birds made their nests in its branches, and it bore such a quantity of fruit that all the earth was fed by it. Then Nebuchadnezzar dreamed that a holy one from heaven came down and gave this commandment, "Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches."

But the king dreamed that the stump was to be left, and this tree, which was spoken of as a person, should have his heart changed and a beast's heart given him, and all this was to happen, "that the living might know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men."

The king called before him the magicians and the aströlogers and told them his dream. Although he could remember to tell them all about this dream, yet these wise men could explain its meaning no better than when they were called upon to recall the first dream.

The king sent for Daniel and seemed quite sure that he could do all he wished, "for," he said, "the spirit of the holy gods is in thee."

As Daniel listened to the king's words his face for a time wore a troubled look. But soon by God's help the meaning of the dream came to him. He told Nebuchadnezzar that the tree which he saw in his dream was himself. "It is thou, O king," he said, "that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven and thy dominion to the end of the earth."

But Daniel assured him that the time would come when, like the tree, he would be cut down and fall to the earth, and that a beast's heart would one day be given him, and that he

would be driven from men, and made to eat grass like the oxen. He would live in this wretched way until he learned "that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will."

This was not a pleasant message to give the king, and Daniel ventured to advise him in the matter, and said to him, "Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor."

King Nebuchadnezzar must have given little heed to this good advice, for only a year after he is spoken of as being more proud and haughty than ever. As he was walking one day in his beautiful palace and admiring all the costly and precious things which he had gathered about him, he was so filled with pride that he boastingly said, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?"

Even while he was praising himself in this way he heard a voice from heaven saying, "O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee."

In that very hour his reason left him, and he became a madman. He acted so like a beast

that he was driven away from the palace and out into the fields with the cattle, where he ate grass like them. He lived in this way a long time, but at last his reason returned, and he was in his right mind again, so that he could attend once more to the affairs of his kingdom.

He acknowledged his wrong-doing and the justice of God in punishing him, and said, "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

The king reigned many years after this, and lived to be more than eighty years of age.

Belshazzar was the next king of Babylon, and was fond of the luxury and splendor which his position gave him. One day he made a great feast, and invited to the palace a thousand of his lords. The table was laid with costly dishes of gold and silver, but he was not satisfied with these. He thought it would add to the splendor of the feast if he could place before his guests the golden dishes which his father, Nebuchadnezzar, had brought from the Temple at Jerusalem. He had never dared to use these vessels until now, but becoming merry with the wine he had been so freely drinking, he resolved to commit this great sin. The

sacred vessels were sent for, and the king and his princes and his wives drank from them, and sang praises to the gods of gold and silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.

In the midst of this merry-making there suddenly appeared the fingers of a man's hand writing upon the wall of the palace. The frightened king turned deadly pale, and he trembled so that his knees smote together. He hastily sent for all the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers, and said to these wise men of Babylon, "Whosoever shall read this writing and show me the interpretation thereof shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom."

None of these wise men was able to tell the king the meaning of the writing, and he was more frightened than ever and his lords were quaking with fear.

The queen's apartments were in another part of the palace, but she soon heard of what had happened, and hastened to the banquet hall. She too was sore afraid when she saw the mysterious handwriting upon the wall, and then she thought of something that gave her a little hope of finding out what those strange words could mean. She said to her husband: "O

king, live forever; let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed. There is a man in thy kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him, and whom Nebuchadnezzar thy father made master of the magicians. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation."

The king was only too glad to do as the queen advised. Daniel was hastily brought before them, and the king said to him: "I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee. And now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof; but they could not show the interpretation of the thing. And I have heard of thee that thou canst make interpretations and dissolve doubts. Now if thou canst read the writing and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom."

Then Daniel answered, "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another: yet

I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation."

He told Belshazzar how his father Nebuchadnezzar had been punished for his idolatry and pride until he was taught that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men; and looking into the face of the guilty king Daniel added: "And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this, but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou and thy lords have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know; and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified."

As Daniel finished speaking the part of the hand upon the wall was withdrawn, and these words remained, — MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. And he said to the king: "This is the interpretation of the thing:—MENE, God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it. TEKEL, Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting. UPHARSIN, Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

These must have been unwelcome words to the king, and could hardly have quieted his fears, but he kept his promise to Daniel, and after clothing him in scarlet, and putting a chain of gold about his neck, he caused him to be proclaimed the third ruler in his kingdom.

Neither the king nor Daniel had long to enjoy their rule, for that very night the city of Babylon was taken by the army of Cyrus the Persian, and Belshazzar was slain.

Daniel found so much favor with the new king of Babylon that he also made him a ruler in his kingdom, and "he was preferred above all the princes because an excellent spirit was found in him ; and the king thought to set him over the whole kingdom."

The other princes and rulers became angry and jealous when they saw how much favor was shown to Daniel. They watched him closely to see if some fault could not be found with the way he managed the king's affairs. But he was always so obedient and faithful in all he did, that these efforts were in vain.

"We shall not find occasion against this Daniel," they said among themselves, "except we find it against him concerning the law of his God."

They were not long in forming a plot to

make trouble for the man they hated. When all was ready they went together to the king, and said to him: "King Darius, live forever. All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors and the princes, the counsellors and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not."

The king thought the decree a wise one, and signed the writing which made it a law.

When Daniel heard of this law, he knew that now his life was in danger, but he was not afraid. It was his habit to enter his chamber three times every day, and there kneel in prayer. He went directly there after hearing that the king had signed the writing, and falling upon his knees with his face towards Jerusalem, his old home, he prayed and gave thanks to God as he always had done before.

The men who had caused King Darius to make the decree were watching to see if Daniel obeyed it, and when they found that he fearlessly went on praying to his God three

times a day, they went directly and informed the king. They said to him, "Hast thou not signed a decree that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?"

The king replied, "The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not."

Then they answered, "That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree which thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day."

The king was sorry then that he had been persuaded to make this law. The Bible says, "he was sore displeased with himself, and his heart was set on Daniel to deliver him," and he tried all the rest of the day to think of some way in which it could be done. But Daniel's enemies were impatient to have the law carried out, and they all came again to the king to remind him that he could not change a law that he had once made.

With a heavy heart King Darius gave the order for Daniel to be thrust into the den of lions, and he went with him there himself and tried to comfort him. He said, "Thy God,

whom thou servest continually, will deliver thee."

They brought a stone and sealed up the mouth of the den, and put the king's seal upon it, so that all might know that the law which Daniel had disobeyed had been carried out.

The king went sadly back to his palace, but he could not sleep from thinking of the poor man among the fierce lions. He rose very early in the morning and went as quickly as possible to the den of lions. He cried out in a sorrowful voice, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God whom thou servest continually able to deliver thee from the lions?"

How his heart must have leaped with joy when Daniel's well-known voice answered: "O king, live forever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me; forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt."

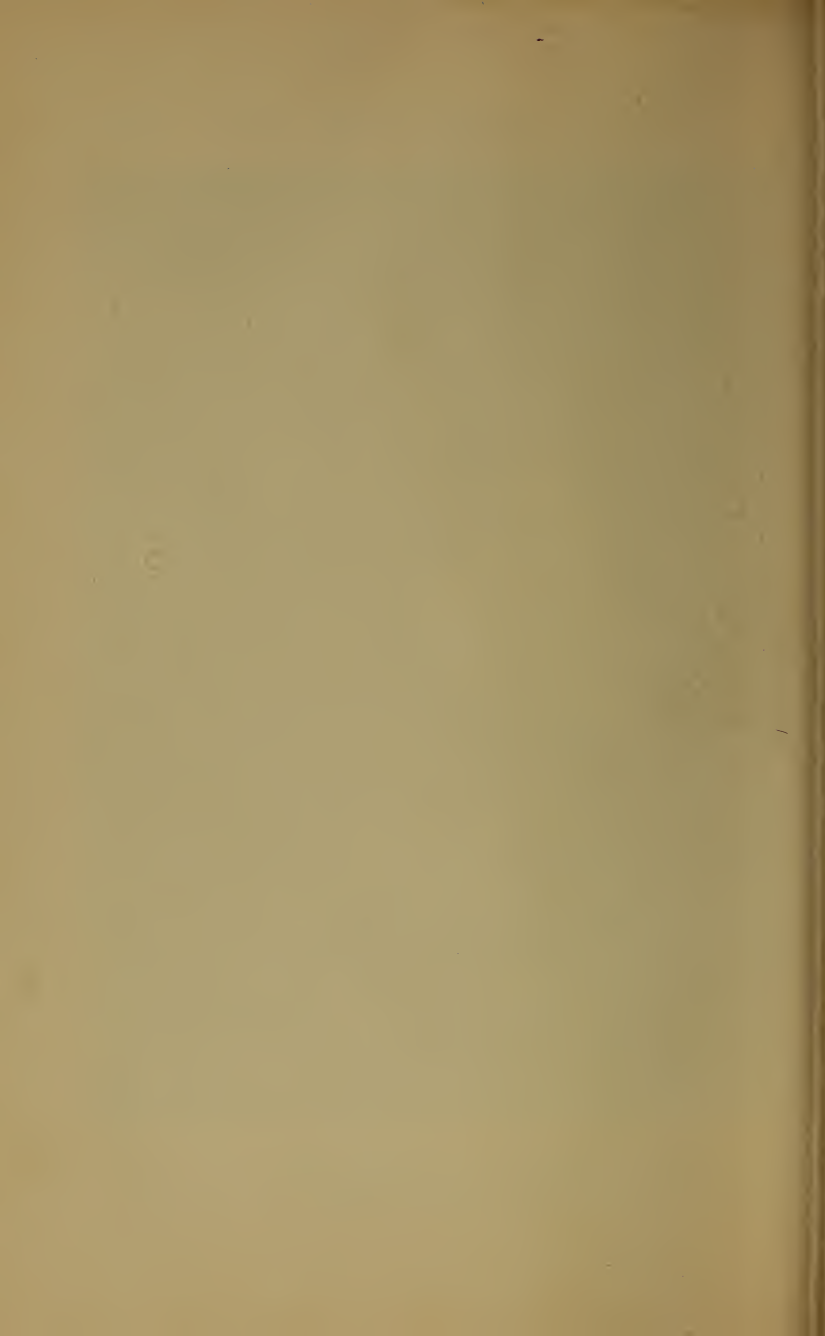
The king was indeed exceedingly glad, and gave orders that Daniel should be taken out of the den of lions; "and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God."

A swift punishment came upon the enemies of



DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN.

From a painting by Vernet.



Daniel, for the king commanded that not they only, but their wives and children also, should be cast into the den of lions. The mouths of the fierce beasts had been opened, and these people were torn in pieces before they had reached the bottom of the den.

King Darius believed in God so firmly himself, that he made a decree, and had it written in all the languages of his kingdom, "That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and steadfast forever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end."

Daniel saw no more trouble during the reign of his kind friend King Darius, and when Cyrus the Persian came upon the throne he still kept his place as an honored man in the kingdom.

THE BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF JESUS

AT one time in its history the Roman Empire was so large that it had provinces in almost every part of the world. In the reign of Cæsar Augustus, a decree was made that all persons in these provinces should go to the city where each was born, to be taxed.

Judea, the land of the children of Israel, over whom David and Solomon once reigned as kings, had now become a Roman province; and this law of the emperor required all the dwellers there to go to the city or village of their birth, and have their names enrolled.

Joseph, a carpenter of Nazareth, with his wife Mary, belonged to Bethlehem, for their family was descended from King David. It was a long distance from Nazareth, and when they arrived tired and weary from their journey, they found that all the inns were full. A great many people had probably come on the same errand as themselves, and so every inn was crowded with guests. The only place they could find

to shelter them was a stable or stall, where cattle were shut in for the night. But this humble place has become more noted than any palace hall, for Jesus, the Saviour of the world, was born there.

On the plains of Bethlehem that night, some shepherds were watching over their flocks. There were still many wild beasts in the land, and often robbers were prowling about, and the shepherds had to watch the sheep carefully, especially at night.

Suddenly a brilliant light burst upon them, and an angel appeared, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and, we are told, "they were sore afraid."

The angel hastened to comfort them, and said, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

The angel had scarcely done speaking these wonderful words when suddenly there was a burst of heavenly music, and a great multitude of angels joined in a beautiful anthem of praise. They sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

This has become the Christmas anthem the world over, and is sung by the people of all lands who have heard the good tidings which the angels brought.

When the music had ceased, and the angels had winged their flight to heaven, the shepherds looked into each other's faces with joy and wonder. A Saviour born, which is Christ the Lord! "Let us go," they said, "even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us."

So they left their sheep and hastened over the fields to the stable, where they found the beautiful babe and his mother, with Joseph watching near them. It was just as the angel had said, — the babe was wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. These humble shepherds had been honored more than all the dwellers in Judea, for God had sent an angel directly to them to tell the wonderful news of a Saviour's birth. They spread the glad tidings everywhere, "and the people wondered at these things that were told them by the shepherds."

As Mary held the babe in her arms, and listened to the story of these men, she too wondered, but she kept her thoughts hidden in her heart.

As the shepherds returned to their flocks, all the world seemed changed to them, and they went on their way "glorifying and praising God."

Afar off in some Eastern land there were three wise men who believed that a great deliverer would one day come, who would not only teach and reform the world, but would bring a time of peace among all the nations. In some way they gained the idea that this deliverer would be a king of the Jews. They were always watching for signs in the heavens, and one night such a brilliant new star appeared in the east that they at once thought it was a divine guide to lead them where this king might be found.

They hastily made themselves ready and started upon their journey. They followed the star, which moved steadily before them to the land of Judea and to the city of Jerusalem. As soon as they arrived they astonished the people there by asking, "Where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east and have come to worship him."

Herod, who reigned over Judea at this time subject to the Roman emperor, was greatly troubled and all Jerusalem with him. What did it mean that a child should be spoken of as born king of the Jews? This people, as Herod

well knew, were expecting a Messiah or deliverer, and could it be that he had really come?

He called together the Jewish Sanhedrim, a council of seventy men, who knew all about the traditions and laws of their people, and he anxiously asked them where their records said this Messiah should be born. And they answered him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 'And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not least among the princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.'"

This alarmed Herod still more, and so he called the wise men and asked them privately about this star and what time it appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem to find the new king. He said to them, "Go search diligently for the young child, and when ye have found him bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also."

The wise men went gladly on their way, and the beautiful star in the east again went on before them, until it stopped directly over the house where the young child was. When they saw that the star had ceased moving they rejoiced with "exceeding great joy," for now their long journey was happily ended.

As soon as they saw the babe lying there in his mother's arms, they fell down and worshipped him. They expected to find an infant king, and so they had brought rich presents from their far-off homes, such as were given only to those of royal blood. With hearts full of reverence they laid at the child's feet their costly gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They were warned by God in a dream not to seek Herod again, and so they returned to their own country another way.

The child was named Jesus, and when a few weeks old was taken to the Temple at Jerusalem, where a sacrifice of two turtle-doves was offered for him, according to the Jewish law.

There was an aged man in Jerusalem named Simeon, who had been long expecting that a deliverer would come to his people. He was a just and good man, and often went to the Temple to worship. God's Spirit had made known to him that before his death he should see this deliverer, who should be known to the world as the "Lord's Christ."

He was there in the Temple when the infant Jesus was brought in; and as he looked upon the babe he knew that the wish of his heart was realized. He took the child in his arms and blessed him, and with a glad voice he said: —

“Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all the people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.”

We cannot wonder that Joseph and Mary marvelled at these things which were said of the child.

Soon Anna, an aged and saintly woman, came into that part of the Temple, and she too gave thanks that she had lived to see the child which should grow up to be the Redeemer of his people.

When King Herod found that the wise men had given no heed to his command, but had returned to their own land without coming to tell him of the infant king, he was very angry. He wished to know where the babe was to be found, not that he wanted to worship him, as he pretended, but that he might put him to death. In order to carry out this wicked design, he made a cruel law that all the babies in Bethlehem, and in the country near the village, should be killed. We can imagine what a wail of sorrow must have been heard all over that region when these little ones were snatched from their mothers' arms and cruelly murdered.

But Herod's evil plan was not carried out in

regard to the infant Jesus, for an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream, and said to him, "Arise, and take the young child and his mother and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him."

Joseph arose in the night, and with Mary and the babe started upon their long and weary journey. They must travel a part of the way over the sandy desert, and perhaps a soft-footed camel may have taken them gently across it. We may be sure that the little party lacked no comforts by the way, for the gifts of the wise men, if they had no other means, were amply sufficient for their needs.

After the death of Herod, the angel again appeared to Joseph, saying, "Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life."

How gladly they must have obeyed this message, assuring them that the danger from Herod was past, and they might seek their old home in peace.

It was not quite safe, however, to live in Bethlehem or its vicinity, for Archelaus, the son of Herod, now reigned as king, and he might seek to carry out the evil plans of his

father. So Joseph and his family went back to Nazareth, where they had lived before the birth of Jesus. In making this place their home, the words of the prophet came true, which said, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

The Bible doesn't speak at all of the early years of Jesus, when he was a little toddling child. It tells us only that "he grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him."

We can think of him only as a sweet-tempered, obedient child, playing among the children of Nazareth, and roaming with them over the fields near by the city, and picking the beautiful flowers which he loved.

Perhaps he used to go with his mother when she went to draw water from the well, and we can think of him as helping Joseph in whatever work his little hands could do for him.

He probably went every Sabbath day to the synagogue, and heard the rabbi read from the prophets and explain their meaning to the people. He was so learned in the Scriptures when he became a man, that as a child his mother must have often taught him from the sacred writings.

Once every year people went from all parts of Palestine up to Jerusalem their Holy City to keep the Passover. When Jesus was twelve



THE BOY CHRIST AND THE DOCTORS.

From a painting by Hofmann.

years old, Joseph and Mary permitted him to take this journey with them for the first time. He had read about the glory of Jerusalem in the olden days, and had heard it spoken of with love and reverence all his life. We cannot doubt that his heart was full of joyful anticipation as he climbed the steep hills, and that his face shone with gladness when the walls of the city and the pinnacle of the Temple first met his eyes.

When the Passover feast was ended, the crowds of people who had come from a distance to attend it began to return slowly back to their homes. Joseph and Mary, thinking that Jesus had started with them and was somewhere in the company, went a day's journey without missing him. With anxious hearts they then searched for him among all their kindred and acquaintances, but no one had seen him. With weary feet they walked hastily back to Jerusalem, looking everywhere for the missing boy. At length, after three days, they searched all parts of the Temple, and found him where the rabbis and the learned doctors of the law were wont to meet. With shining face and earnest words he was talking with these doctors about matters of the law, and "they were astonished at his understanding and answers."

Joseph and Mary were as much amazed as the doctors, and his mother said to him: "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing."

Strange deep thoughts had come to the boy Jesus in those three days, and looking up to his mother he said: "How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

What could the child mean by this reference to his Father, and the business he must do for him? Like many others of his sayings they could not at all understand it.

But he meant no disrespect to those who had so tenderly cared for him, and he went quietly back with them to their home in Nazareth, where he obeyed all their commands.

The Bible ends this short story of the childhood of Jesus with telling us that from this time "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."

THE STORY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

AMONG the priests who served in the Temple at Jerusalem was Zacharias, whose wife was named Elisabeth; and they are both spoken of in the Bible as "righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."

There were many priests set apart for the Temple service at Jerusalem and they took turns in performing their work, which was of different kinds. It was the turn of Zacharias to serve, and it fell to him by lot to burn incense upon the altar when he entered the Temple. At the same time that this incense was burning, the people were praying without in the courts.

One morning while this worship was going on, an angel suddenly appeared standing at one side of the altar of incense. When Zacharias saw him, it is said, "he was troubled, and fear fell upon him."

It had always been a great sorrow to Zacharias and Elisabeth that no children had been given them: and the angel said that one day a

son should come to their home, and he added: "Thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt rejoice at his birth. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God."

This news seemed to Zacharias too good to be true. He wanted to be assured in some way that this thing would really happen, so he said to the angel, "Whereby shall I know this?"

We can almost see the reproving look of the angel as he answered, "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God, and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings." And then he told Zacharias that on account of his unbelief he should become dumb, and not able to speak, until what had been told him should come to pass.

This interview with the angel had kept Zacharias in the Temple much longer than usual. The people, who had been praying in the court, wondered what had become of him, and when he came out and was unable to speak to them, they were much astonished. By signs which he made to them, they knew that he had seen a vision in the Temple, and for some reason had become dumb.

It was a day of rejoicing in the home of Zacharias and Elisabeth when they received the

little son that had been promised by the angel. All the neighbors and the friends of the mother came to rejoice with her, and wished her to name the child Zacharias, for his father.

But she said to them, "Not so, but he shall be called John." They wondered at her choosing this name, for they said, "There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name." Then they asked the father by signs what he would like to name his child, and, calling for writing materials, he wrote, saying, "His name is John." The people were surprised that both his parents should have chosen a name for their child which none of their kindred bore. Their wonder was increased when Zacharias, whose tongue had suddenly become loosed, "spake and praised God." It is said that fear came upon all that dwelt about them, and these sayings were noised abroad through all the hill country of Judea. "All that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be?"

Zacharias, it is said, was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied. He seemed to possess the gift of seeing into the future, and of knowing what this child would be able to do. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel," he cried, "for he hath visited and redeemed his people." And of

John he said, "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

It was said of this wonderful child that the hand of the Lord was with him. "He grew and waxed strong in spirit," and when he was old enough to leave his home, he went away from all his kindred and lived in the desert. There he could roam about without any one to trouble him, and get ready for the work which he knew he would have to perform when he became a man.

He dressed in the same way as Elijah and the prophets, of whom we read in the Scriptures. He wore a robe of coarse camel's hair, and this was fastened with a leathern girdle, and his hair was long and fell loosely over his shoulders. His food was of the plainest kind, for he lived mainly on the locusts and wild honey which he found in the desert.

The people were, many of them, looking for some great prophet or great man to appear. There had been no prophets in Israel for several hundred years, and they thought it was now time for some messenger from God to be sent them.

John lived there in the desert until he was grown up and of the proper age to teach the people. While leading this wild life apart from others, he was seen occasionally by the people who happened to pass through the desert places where he lived. Those who did catch a glimpse of him, and noted how plainly he lived and how much he fasted and prayed, believed that he was indeed a prophet and a holy man of God.

When at last he came forth to begin his work and proclaim his message, the people went in crowds to hear him. His first words must have startled them all, as he cried out, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

As John went about preaching from day to day, the news of his strange appearance, so like the description of the old prophets, and his earnest call for them to repent, went all over the country. The Bible says, "Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region round about Jordan."

They had heeded his faithful warnings, and now all these people had come for John to baptize them in the river Jordan.

There were many thousands of people living in Judea at that time, and as John's preaching caused so many of them to repent of their sins and lead a better life, the saying of the angel

became true, that "many of the children of Israel should he turn to the Lord their God."

John was not afraid to speak the truth at all times. When he saw that some were only pretending to repent and lead better lives, he reproved them severely. There were two classes or sects among the Jews, who were known as Pharisees and Sadducees. They could never agree with each other and were very proud and boastful. They made long prayers in the streets, so men could see how good they were, and then perhaps would go away and cruelly treat some poor and needy person who might owe them a few pennies.

When John saw these people coming to his baptism, he cried out fiercely, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" He assured them, if they really wished to become better they must change their lives, and bring forth good instead of evil fruit. If they refused to do this it would be of no use for them to boast, as they were always doing, that they were children of Abraham and must be accepted of God. These people were not pleased to hear such words of reproof from John, but they dared not speak against him, for they feared the anger of the common people, who loved and believed in this bold prophet.

The chief object of John's mission was to prepare the way for another and a greater one who was to follow him. He often spoke of this in his preaching, but no one then understood what he meant.

One day he was baptizing a number of his disciples in the river Jordan, near the town of Bethabara. As he looked across the fields he saw Jesus coming towards him, and he cried out: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, 'After me cometh a man who is preferred before me; for he was before me.'"

John wanted the people to know him as the one of whom he had so often spoken. But when Jesus came to him and wished to be baptized like the others, John refused him, for he felt that he was not worthy to do this. But Jesus gently urged him, and said, "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

John could not refuse then, and when Jesus was baptized and was coming forth from the water a wonderful thing happened. From an opening in the heavens he saw the Spirit of God descending in the form of a beautiful dove and resting upon him, and there came a voice which said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

John had been assured that some sign would be given him, by which he might know the one for whom he had been preparing the way. It was said to him, "Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Spirit."

This sign had now been given him, and so John was able to say to the people, "This is the Son of God."

Jesus himself very soon began to teach, but John kept on preaching and baptizing those who came to him. He was always ready to answer their questions. When he had been telling the people once to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance, they asked him, "What shall we do then?"

He said to them, "He that hath two coats let him impart to him that hath none: and he that hath meat let him do likewise."

Among others who came to be baptized were the publicans who were employed by the Roman government to collect taxes from the people. They asked of John, "Master, what shall we do?" and he answered, "Exact no more than is appointed you." Then the soldiers came and said to him, "And what shall we do?" and he replied, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely: and be content with your wages."

John thus taught his disciples to live good and true lives, and the duty of fasting and prayer. When he saw the people disobeying God and doing things which they knew to be wrong, he would reprove them, no matter how high they were in station.

He once gave a sharp rebuke to King Herod for his many sins, and among other things he reproved him for marrying his brother's wife, which was against the law. Herod was so angry with John for daring to accuse him in this way, that he put him in prison.

The place where he was confined was the castle Machærus. This was a fortress built on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea, and here he was kept for a long time. It was a lonely and dreary place, and John, who had always lived so much out of doors, must have suffered greatly there. Sometimes he would hear tidings of how Jesus, whom he had baptized, was preaching all over the land and doing the most wonderful miracles.

A court festival was kept one day, at the castle where John was a prisoner, in honor of the king's birthday. After supper had been served, Salome, the young daughter of Herodias the king's wife, came in and danced before them. The king was so pleased with her beauty and

grace that he promised her with a solemn oath, he would give her whatsoever she would ask. Herodias had disliked John the Baptist ever since he had rebuked the king and herself for their wrong-doing, and now she thought of a cruel revenge. The chance had come by which she might cause his death, and thus get rid of her accuser forever. So this wicked mother commanded Salome to say, in reply to the king's offer, "Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger."

The king was sorry now that he had made such a rash promise, but he had taken an oath to perform it, and was not brave enough to break it when he saw it would lead to a great crime. So a man was sent to the prison of the castle to do this dreadful work, and soon the ghastly present which she had asked for was brought to the girl and she gave it to her mother.

There was great mourning among his disciples when the news of John's death reached them.

It is said that when Jesus heard of it he went away by himself apart from all others, which shows how much he felt the loss of the good man who had been sent to prepare the way before him.

HOW JESUS TAUGHT HIS DISCIPLES

SOON after his baptism, and when he was thirty years old, Jesus began to be a public teacher. The Jewish law would not allow a man to teach until he had reached this age, and as Jesus was careful in all his acts to fulfil the law, he waited until the proper time before he began to teach in public.

He had a great work to do in the world, and he needed helpers to whom he could teach the truths which the people so much needed to hear.

As Jesus was walking one day by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers Peter and Andrew, "casting their nets into the sea, for they were fishers." He called to them, saying, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

They might not have known just what Jesus meant by making them "fishers of men," but they cheerfully obeyed the call, and "left their nets and followed him."

He went a little farther on and came to where two other brothers, James and John, were

in a boat with Zebedee, their father, mending their nets. He called these brothers also to follow him, and "they straightway left their father in the boat and followed him." Jesus afterward called other disciples until there were twelve of them, and they used to go about with him from place to place as he taught the people.

Soon crowds gathered around wherever he went. One day seeing a great multitude who were eager to hear him, he sat down upon the mountain side, and began the most wonderful sermon that was ever preached, by saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

There were many others whom he pronounced "blessed," and foreseeing that those who believed on him would suffer for doing so, he said: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

These words of blessing, which have comforted so many hearts, are called the Beatitudes of the Bible.

Many of the truths which Jesus taught seemed strange to the people; they had never

heard such words before. They had always been taught to return evil for evil, but Jesus told them they must do just the opposite of this, and return good for evil. He said to them: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you. Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."

This verse from Christ's sermon is known everywhere as the "Golden Rule," and if kept by all, we cannot imagine what a changed world this would become.

People in those days, especially the Pharisees, thought they must make long prayers, and repeat some of their words over and over, in order to please God. They often prayed in the public streets, as if to make a show of their goodness.

Jesus taught them to enter into their closets, and when they had shut the door, to pray to their Father in secret, and he assured them that he would hear them and reward them openly.

The people had always thought of God as a being too holy for them to approach, but one whom they must fear and obey, lest he punish them in his anger. But Jesus told his disciples

to call God their Father, and taught them this beautiful prayer, which people both young and old are daily offering in all the languages of the world: —

“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.”

When Jesus had ended his sermon, so full of new thoughts, and spoken in such beautiful words, we cannot wonder that the people “were astonished at his doctrine.”

Often when Jesus wished to impress some particular truth upon the minds of his hearers he would give it in the form of a parable or story. At one time Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven;” and he told the disciples this story: —

There was once a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. One of them was brought to him who owed two thousand talents.

When the king found that the man had nothing with which to pay this debt, he gave an order that he should be sold, and his wife and children and all that he had, and with the money thus obtained payment should be made. The poor man in his distress fell down at his master's feet and cried out, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." The king's heart was so touched with pity, that he set the man free, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant, as he went out from his master's presence, found one of his fellow-servants that owed him an hundred pence only, and he took him roughly by the throat and said, "Pay me that thou owest." The fellow-servant fell down at his feet and begged his mercy, and he too said, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all."

But he would not: but went and put him into the prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they went and told their lord.

Then his lord, after he had called him, said unto him: "O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me. Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?" And his lord was wroth and delivered him to

the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

"So likewise," said Jesus, "shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

Jesus tried to assure his disciples of the justice of their heavenly Father in his dealings with them; and that whether their service was long or short, they would each receive the reward promised them.

He said that a certain nobleman went out early one morning to hire laborers to work in his vineyard. And when he had agreed with them for a penny a day, he sent them into the vineyard. A few hours after he went out and found others who were standing idle in the market-place, and to them he said, "Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you." Still later on he found others who wanted work, and he hired them. He went out again at the eleventh hour when the day's work was almost done, and found that even then there were laborers standing idle. He said to them, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" They answered, "Because no one hath hired us." To them he kindly said, "Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatever is right ye shall receive."

When evening came, which was the time for

payment, the householder said to his steward, "Call the laborers and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first."

Those who came at the eleventh hour received every man his penny. Those who came first thought they should receive more, and when they were paid a penny only, they found fault with their master, and said, "These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, who have borne the burden and heat of the day."

But the master replied: "Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way. I will give unto this last even as unto thee."

At another time Jesus wished to impress upon his disciples the value of time and of the various gifts which God bestows upon his children. They should make the most of these gifts, and so become rich in right living, and always ready to give a good account whenever the Lord should call for it. Then Jesus told them this story:—

The kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to

his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

After a long time the lord of these servants came, and reckoned with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, "Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them, five talents more." His lord said unto him, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." He also that had received two talents came and said, "Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them." His lord said unto him, "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

Then he that had received the one talent came and said, "Lord, I knew that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewed:

and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast what is thine." His lord answered and said unto him: "Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strewed: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him and give to him that hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Sometimes the lawyers, who were the learned men among the Jews, came to tempt Jesus by asking him what they thought were puzzling questions. One of these lawyers came to him one day, and said, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus answered by asking him the question, "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" The lawyer replied by repeating the commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and

with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." Jesus said to him, "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live." The lawyer cared not to obey this command, so to justify himself he asked, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus answered him by telling him this story: —

A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his raiment and wounded him and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence and gave them to the host, and said unto him, "Take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee."

"Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?" asked Jesus.

And the lawyer answered, "He that showed mercy on him."

Then said Jesus, "Go, and do thou likewise."

Jesus had a tender heart for the little children, and at one time, when his disciples were disputing as to which should be greatest in his kingdom, he called a little child to him, and set him in the midst of them, and said that unless they changed their lives, and became as obedient and truthful as little children were, they could not enter the kingdom of heaven. And turning toward the child, he said to his disciples, "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Jesus loved and appreciated the little ones himself, and he wanted his disciples always to treat them tenderly, and so he said: "And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

Sometimes the disciples seemed to forget these words of Jesus, for one day when some anxious mothers brought their babies to him for a blessing, these disciples rebuked the mothers. They

thought it was an improper thing for them to bring such young children there to trouble the Master.

But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God."

After he had spoken these gracious words, how glad the mothers must have been when he took the little ones in his arms, and putting his hands upon them, gave them his blessing.

In teaching his disciples with what joy our Heavenly Father receives those who truly repent of their wrong-doing, and come to him for forgiveness, Jesus told this beautiful story of the "Prodigal Son": —

A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, "Give me the portion of goods which falleth to me." And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance in riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his field to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the

husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself he said: "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." And he arose and came to his father. But when he was a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said unto him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." But the father said to his servants: "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and be merry. For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." And they began to be merry.

Now his elder brother was in the field, and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, "Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf because he hath received him safe and sound." And he

was angry and would not go in ; therefore came his father out and entreated him. And he answering said to his father : “ Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment ; and yet thou never gave me a kid to make merry with my friends. But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.”

And he said unto him : “ Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet we should make merry and be glad ; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again ; and was lost, and is found.”

These are but a few of the precious truths which Jesus spake to his disciples during the three years of his teaching on earth. But these serve to show why it was that the people “ wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.”

THE WONDERFUL WORKS OF JESUS

THE coming of Jesus was foretold by the prophets many years before he was born, and they prophesied that when he came "the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then the lame man shall leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing."

John the Baptist, as we know, was once a long time in prison, and before he heard of the miracles that Jesus was performing, or was aware that he had any more than twelve disciples, he felt discouraged. He almost doubted whether Jesus was really the Christ of God. And so he sent and asked him, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"

Jesus said to those who brought him the message: "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them."

These were the very works that the prophets had said that Jesus should perform, and so John

was comforted, for now he knew it was really he of whom the prophets spoke.

The first miracle which Jesus performed was in Cana of Galilee. A wedding feast was being held, and the mother of Jesus was there. It happened that there was no more wine for the guests, and his mother told him of this. Thinking perhaps that Jesus might help them, his mother said to the servants, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."

There were sitting there six water-pots of stone, and Jesus told the servants to fill them with water, and they did fill them to the brim. Jesus then said to the servants, "Draw out now, and bear unto the ruler of the feast."

The water had become wine of such a fine quality that the ruler sent for the bridegroom, and said to him, "Every man setteth on first the good wine; and when men have drunk freely, then that which is worse: thou hast kept the good wine until now."

The news of this turning of water into wine went abroad through all that region. And when Jesus came again to Cana, a nobleman, whose son lay at the point of death, came and besought him that he would come down and heal his son. Jesus replied, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe."

But the nobleman showed by his eagerness that he did believe, for he urged Jesus again, saying, "Sir, come down ere my child die."

Then Jesus said unto him, "Go thy way; thy son liveth." Before the nobleman reached his home his servants met him with the good news, "Thy son liveth."

He asked of them at what time he began to amend, and they replied, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." So the father knew that it was at the same hour in which Jesus said unto him, "Thy son liveth," and it is said, "he believed, and his whole house."

One day Jesus took three of his disciples, Peter, James, and John, and went up into a high mountain away from all the others. As these disciples were talking with Jesus, his appearance suddenly changed. It is said that his face shone as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And with him appeared two others, Moses and Elijah, who seemed to be talking with him. Peter cried out, "Lord, it is good for us to be here;" and he wanted to make three tabernacles, one for each of these shining ones, and stay there for a long time. While he was yet speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold a voice out of

the cloud, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

When his disciples heard this voice from heaven, they fell upon their faces and were sore afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said to them, "Arise, and be not afraid." And when they lifted up their eyes they saw no man save Jesus only. The beautiful vision had vanished, but the wonder and the joy of it they would never forget.

When they had come down from the mount, a man came kneeling to Jesus, and said to him, "Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is epileptic, and suffereth grievously: for oft-times he falleth into the fire, and oft-times into the water." Jesus said, "Bring him hither to me." And Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, and he went out from him, and the boy was cured from that hour.

After this, Jesus and his disciples went to Capernaum, and there he entered into the synagogue and taught the people. There was in the synagogue that day a man who had what was called in those days an unclean spirit, and this man cried out: "What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God."

The unclean spirit was speaking thus, and

Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Hold thy peace, and come out of him." And we are told that the unclean spirit, tearing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him.

We cannot wonder that the people were all amazed, and asked each other, "What is this? a new teaching? with authority he commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they obey him."

The report of this miracle went everywhere, especially into all the region round about Galilee.

Jesus then went with his disciples, James and John, to the house of Simon Peter, whose wife's mother lay sick of a fever. Jesus went to her and tenderly took her by the hand, and the fever left her; and she rose from her bed, and was able to minister to all these unexpected guests.

The fame of these wonderful works spread far and near, and when Jesus went again to Capernaum it was soon known that he was there. Such throngs came to hear him that the house where he was speaking was crowded.

A poor man who was sick of the palsy was borne there by his friends, hoping that he might see Jesus and be cured. When his friends found that there was no chance of reaching him because of the crowd, they did what would seem to us a very strange thing. They bore him to

the top of the house, and, uncovering the roof, which they could easily do with roofs made like that one, they let the man down upon his bed directly before Jesus.

The Master's heart was touched with pity for the man, and seeing their faith, he said to the sick man, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." Some of the scribes who were sitting there, said to themselves, "Why doth this man thus speak blasphememies? who can forgive sins but God only?"

Jesus knew of what they were thinking, and asked them if it were not as easy to forgive sins as to heal the sick. He would prove to them that he had power to forgive sins; so he said to the man who had the palsy, "I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house." And he arose and straightway took up the bed and went forth before them all. The people were all amazed and glorified God, and cried out, saying, "We never saw it on this fashion."

Jesus often entered into a boat with his disciples, and one evening, as they stood upon the shore, he said to them, "Let us go over unto the other side." He had been preaching all day to the crowds of people who had come to hear him, and he was weary and needed rest.

Lying down upon the cushion in the stern of the boat, he soon fell asleep. Suddenly there came a great storm of wind, such as often visited the Sea of Galilee. As the wind increased, the waves dashed into the boat, and were fast filling it with water. In their distress and fear the disciples awoke Jesus, crying, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?"

He calmly rose from his sleep and said to those wild waves, "Peace, be still." And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

Turning to the amazed disciples, he said, "Why are ye fearful? have ye not yet faith?" A marvellous thing had happened; it was not strange that the disciples should say to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

While Jesus was preaching one day, Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came to him, and falling at his feet, said, "My little daughter is at the point of death: I pray thee, that thou come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be made whole, and live."

As Jesus went with the anxious father, a great crowd followed them. Before they reached the house a messenger met them, saying to the father, "Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?"

But Jesus, not minding their words, said to the ruler, "Fear not, only believe." Then taking Peter, James, and John, he left the crowd and went inside the house. It was the custom of the people in those days, who had lost a friend by death, to hire women to mourn for them, crying and making a great noise. These women were already there and wailing piteously when Jesus entered. When he said to them, "Why make ye a tumult and weep? the child is not dead, but sleepeth," they laughed him to scorn.

But he put them all forth, and with his disciples only, and the father and mother, he went in where the child was. Taking her by the hand, he said to her, "Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise." And straightway this little girl of twelve years arose from her bed and was joyfully received by her parents, and Jesus commanded them to give her something to eat.

He was sometimes so utterly weary in preaching to the people and healing all the sick who were brought to him, that he was obliged to go away into some quiet place to rest. Once his disciples had been on a long preaching tour, and they were all so tired that Jesus said to them, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile." There were so many crowd-

ing about, that they had no leisure, even so much as to eat.

They all entered the boat with Jesus, and sailed away to a desert place across the lake. But many of the people who saw them knew who they were, and where they were probably going, and it is said "they ran together on foot from all the cities and outwent them."

When Jesus went on shore from the boat, a great multitude were gathered there to hear him. We are told that he had "compassion on them, for they were as sheep having no shepherd, and he began to teach them many things."

When it was near evening the disciples came to Jesus and said to him, "This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed: send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat."

Jesus replied by bidding the disciples give them something themselves. And they say to him, "Shall we go and buy two hundred penny-worth of bread, and give them to eat?"

Then Jesus said to them, "How many loaves have ye? go and see." They went to find out, and returning, said, "Five, and two small fishes."

Then Jesus commanded the multitude to sit down in companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties. And he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake the loaves; and he gave to the disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all. And they did all eat, and were filled. And they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

The disciples then entered their boat and sailed across the sea to Bethsaida, while Jesus lingered to send the people away to their homes. Then, weary from the day's work, he went into the mountain to pray. At evening time, as he stood looking out upon the sea, he noticed that the disciples were having a hard time in rowing their vessel, for the wind was against them. At about the fourth watch of the night he went out to them, walking upon the sea. When his disciples saw him, they thought it must be a spirit, and they cried out with fear. But soon, in the well-known voice of Jesus, they heard the comforting words, "Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid." With great joy they received him into the boat, and

soon found that the wind had ceased. It had been a day of wonders, and now they were still more amazed, that their Master had come to them walking upon the sea.

Oftentimes, as Jesus was walking by the way, some poor distressed person would call out to him for help. He was one day passing out of Jericho, with his disciples, and as usual a great multitude of people followed him. Bartimæus, a blind beggar, chanced to be sitting by the way-side, and heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth who was passing by. He had heard wonderful stories of his healing people of their diseases, and he thought that possibly Jesus might cure him of his blindness. It was perhaps the only chance he would ever have to attract his attention, and so he cried out eagerly, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Some of those in the crowd rebuked him and bade him hold his peace; but he cried out the more a great deal, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Jesus, who always heard the cry of distress, stood still, and said, "Call ye him." Those who pitied the poor man said to him, "Be of good cheer: rise, he calleth thee."

The blind man sprang up, and in his haste to get to Jesus, he cast away his garment. As he came before him, Jesus asked, "What wilt thou

that I shall do unto thee?" The blind man said unto him, "Rabboni, that I may receive my sight." With joy he heard the answer, "Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole."

But the man whose eyes were opened went not away, but gladly followed the gracious Master who had given him sight.

Many of the mighty works of Jesus were done in Capernaum, and in the region about there. One day Jesus went again to the city. As soon as his arrival was known, a certain nobleman, whose servant was sick, sent some of the Jewish elders to Jesus, asking that he would come and save this servant, for he was well beloved. These elders besought Jesus that he would go, for they said, "He is worthy that thou shouldest do this for him: for he loveth our nation, and himself built us our synagogue." So Jesus went, and as he approached the house, the nobleman sent some of his friends to him, saying, "Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say the word, and my servant shall be healed."

When Jesus heard this message of the centurion, he turned, and said to his followers, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

This faith was rewarded by Jesus sending his

healing power before him, for when the men returned to the centurion's house, they found that the servant had been cured of his disease.

Not long afterward Jesus was passing through the city of Nain with his disciples, and again a great multitude followed him. As they drew near the gate of the city, they saw a sad procession coming out of it, carrying a young man to his burial. He was lying upon a bier, and his nearest relatives were bearing it slowly along. He was "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." The poor woman was weeping bitterly, and many of the friends in the city were showing their sympathy by walking with her.

And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, "Weep not." As he came near the bier he laid his hand upon it, and the bearers stood still. Then in a voice of command he said to the dead son, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." He was instantly obeyed, and as the young man sat up Jesus gave him to his mother, once more a living son to comfort her heart.

We are told that fear fell upon them all; and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet is arisen among us, and God hath visited his people." The tidings spread rapidly over the whole of Judea, and all the region round about.

Many in the land where Jesus lived were afflicted with a dreadful disease called leprosy, and any who were sick with it were required to live by themselves. They were not allowed to come near other people, and if they chanced to see any one coming toward them, even if far off, they were required to cry out, "Unclean! unclean!" as a warning for the person not to approach any nearer.

At one time, when Jesus was passing through Samaria and Galilee, on his way to Jerusalem, he met ten of these lepers. They had heard of this great healer, and standing afar off, they cried out to him, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

He heard their cry and healed them, and told them to go show themselves to the priest, for that was the law if any one was supposed to be cured of leprosy. One of these men, who was a Samaritan, when he found that he was healed, and his flesh was clean and pure again, ran back and "with a loud voice glorified God," and when he came to Jesus he fell at his feet giving him thanks. Jesus looked about him and said: "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? Were there none found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger?" And then he graciously said to him, "Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole."

In a pleasant home in Bethany, a town not far from Jerusalem, lived Lazarus with his two sisters, Martha and Mary. Jesus was always a welcome guest at this home, and he often went there for rest and comfort. They all deeply loved their Master, and Martha delighted to minister to his wants whenever he came to visit them. Mary once showed her great love for him by anointing his feet with some very precious and costly ointment, and then wiping them with her hair.

But Lazarus their brother was one day taken very ill, and the sisters sent Jesus this message, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick."

When he heard of it, Jesus told his disciples that the sickness would not be unto death, but it was for the glory of God. Although he loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus, yet he delayed to go to them for two days. Then he said to his disciples, "Let us go into Judea again." This plan surprised the disciples, and they said, "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee ; and goest thou thither again ?"

But Jesus gave them as a reason for going, "Our friend Lazarus hath fallen asleep ; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep."

But the disciples replied, "Lord, if he is fallen asleep, he will recover." They couldn't

understand that Jesus meant that he was dead, but they thought that he spoke of taking rest in sleep. He then told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead," and said, "And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless, let us go unto him."

Thomas, one of the disciples, thought this was a dangerous journey for the Master to take, but he bravely said to his fellow-disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

When Jesus reached Bethany, he found that Lazarus had been in the tomb four days already. Jewish friends had come to console Martha and Mary concerning their brother. And when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, while Mary remained in the house with their friends. As soon as Martha met Jesus, she said: "Lord if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. And even now I know that, whatsoever thou shalt ask God, God will give thee."

Jesus said to her, "Thy brothers shall rise again." Martha replied, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said unto her: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest

thou this?" Martha replied, "Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

She felt comforted somehow from this talk with Jesus, and went and called Mary secretly from her friends, and said, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee."

When Mary heard this, she rose and went hastily out to seek him. The Jews who had come to comfort her, when they saw that she rose up quickly and went out, followed her, "supposing that she was going unto the tomb to weep there."

When Mary came where Jesus was, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."

When Jesus saw her weeping bitterly, and the Jews also weeping with her, "he groaned in the spirit and was troubled." And he asked, "Where have ye laid him?" They replied, "Lord, come and see." As he stood there by the tomb of his friend, "Jesus wept."

The Jews who saw his grief said, "Behold how he loved him." But some of them, who had seen his wonderful works, said, "Could not this man, which opened the eyes of him that was blind, have caused that this man also should not die?"

Jesus, full of tender pity, approached the tomb, and said to those who stood by, "Take ye away the stone."

Martha thought, as her brother had been dead four days, it would not be well to open the door of the tomb. Jesus gave what Martha must have thought a strange reply, "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?"

When the stone was taken away, Jesus lifted up his eyes and said: "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me." And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." He that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, "Loose him, and let him go."

We can imagine the joy of these sisters, when their brother stood before them restored to life again. How gladly they all went back to the house in company with their Master, rejoicing that they had indeed "seen the glory of God!"

THE BETRAYAL AND TRIAL OF JESUS

MANY of the Jews, who had seen the raising of Lazarus from the dead, believed in Jesus and acknowledged his power, while others, who denied his claims and thought him an impostor, "went and told the Pharisees the things which he had done." They were so troubled at this report of a man having been actually raised from the dead, that they called a council to see what could be done. They said to one another: "This man doeth many signs. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe in him: and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." They all agreed that it was better that Jesus should die than to have this happen.

He walked no more openly among the people, but often went to Bethany and abode with Lazarus and his sisters. They made a supper there for him one evening, and it was then that Mary took the precious ointment of spikenard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped them with her hair. She thought that nothing was

too rare or costly to offer the Master who had brought her brother back again from the dead.

But Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples, was present at this supper, and thought it was wasting the ointment to use it in anointing Jesus. He asked, in a fault-finding tone, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor?" He said this, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and having the bag took away what was put therein.

Jesus commended Mary for what she had done, and said, "The poor ye have always with you; but me ye have not always."

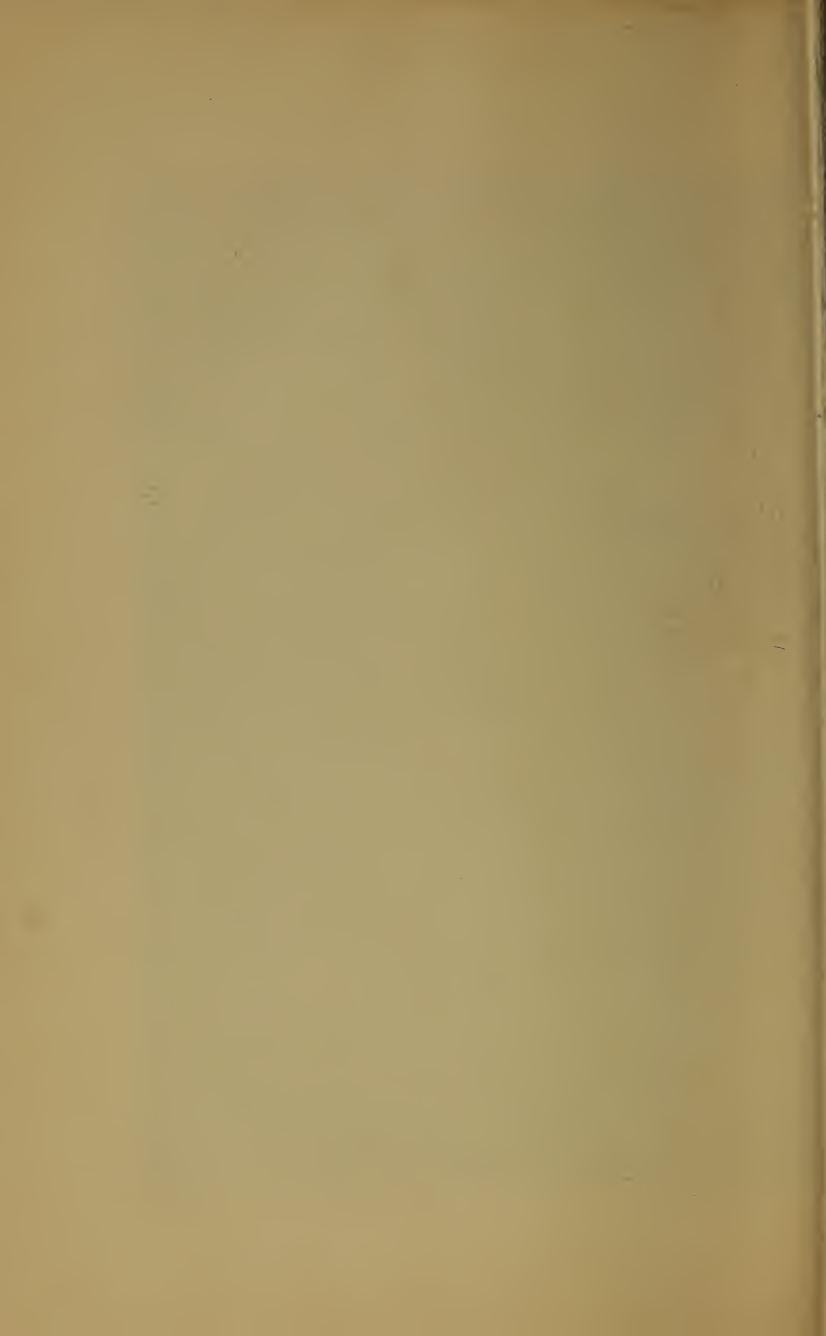
On the morrow Jesus and his disciples left Bethany, and went on their way to Jerusalem. When they had reached the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples before, saying, "Go ye into the village over against you: in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him and bring him hither. And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose him? thus ye shall say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him."

They that were sent went away, and found even as he had said unto them. And as they were loosing the colt, the owners said unto them, "Why loose ye the colt?" And they said, "The



CHRIST ENTERING JERUSALEM.

From a painting by Doré.



Lord hath need of him." And they brought him to Jesus, and threw their garments upon the colt, and set Jesus thereon. And as he went, they spread their garments in the way. And at the descent of the Mount of Olives the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God, with a loud voice, for all the mighty works which they had seen; saying, "Blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven, and glory in the highest."

In the multitude were some of the Pharisees, and they were displeased with this outburst of praise, and said unto Jesus, "Master, rebuke thy disciples." But he answered and said, "I tell you that if these shall hold their peace the stones will cry out."

As Jesus drew near to Jerusalem and thought of all the dreadful things that would happen there on account of the people's unbelief, he wept over it, and said, "If thou hadst known in this thy day, even thou, the things which belong unto thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes."

Soon after Jesus entered the city, he went to the Temple, and when he saw that the men who were greedy to gain money had made it a place in which to buy and sell their wares, he was indignant. In a manner which no one dared to disobey, he cast out all them that sold and

bought in the Temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said to them, "It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer : but ye have made it a den of robbers."

The blind and the lame soon heard that he was in the Temple and they came to him there, and he healed them all. The chief priests and the scribes were also there, and saw the wonderful things which he did. And when at length the children who sang in the Temple came out and cried, "Hosanna to the son of David," they were moved with indignation, and said unto him, "Hearest thou what these are saying?" And Jesus saith unto them, "Yea: did ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, thou hast perfected praise?"

It had been a wonderful and exciting day, and at the evening hour Jesus gladly returned to the peaceful home in Bethany to spend the night.

On the next day he went again to Jerusalem in company with his disciples, and on the way he taught them many truths. When Jesus entered the Temple and began teaching there, the chief priests and the Pharisees, who were his most bitter enemies, came to him and tried to entrap him by asking puzzling questions. One of their disciples said to him: "Master, we know that

thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, and carest not for any one: for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?"

But Jesus saw their wickedness, and said to them: "Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Show me the tribute money." And they brought unto him a penny. And he said unto them, "Whose is the image and superscription on this?" They say unto him, "Cæsar's." Then he said unto them, "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's." And when the people heard how wisely Jesus had answered their question, "they marvelled and went away."

Then the Sadducees came and asked him some question about the resurrection. These people believed that there was no life after death and no resurrection of the dead.

Jesus referred them to their sacred writings, where God says to his people, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." This surely proved that their fathers were still living, for "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." And when the multitude heard it they were astonished at his teaching.

When the Pharisees heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they also came asking him questions, which he answered so wisely that they too became silent. And when he in turn asked them a question, it was said "no one was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions."

After this the chief priests and elders were more bitter against Jesus than ever, and since he had dared to call the scribes and Pharisees hypocrites they began to plot against him.

They all met at the house of Caiaphas the high priest to take counsel together how they might take Jesus and kill him. While they were consulting about this, Judas Iscariot came in and offered to deliver him up to them. And when they heard it, they were glad, and offered to give him money. "What are ye willing to give me," he said, "and I will deliver him unto you?" And they weighed unto him thirty pieces of silver.

This wicked man, who had been a disciple of Jesus, had sold him for the price of a slave, and from that time he began to lay plans for betraying his Master.

The feast of the passover was held once every year in Jerusalem, and as the time for this drew near, Jesus wished to eat it with his disciples ;

and they asked him where he would like to have them prepare it. Jesus said to them, "Go into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him; and wheresoever he shall enter in, say to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is my guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he will show you a large upper room furnished; there make ready."

The disciples went as Jesus directed, and found the furnished room, and there they made ready the passover. And at the evening hour Jesus and his twelve disciples gathered together to eat their Last Supper.

And Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave to them, saying, "This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me." And of the cup he said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is shed for you."

It is thought that when the disciples took their places at the table there was some ill feeling among them, and a strife as to which should be the greatest and have the best place there. Jesus rebuked them, saying, "He that is greatest among you, let him become as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve."

Then Jesus, rising from the table, laid aside his

garments, and girding himself with a towel he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded. The Bible tells us that when he had washed their feet, and taken his garments and sat down again, he said unto them: "Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord: neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him."

When Jesus told his disciples that one of their number should betray him, they were troubled and were in doubt of whom he spoke. So Peter made a sign to John, who was leaning on Jesus' breast, that he should ask him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus replied, "He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it." Jesus then gave the sop to Judas, and it is said that "Satan entered into him."

Jesus said to him, "That thou doest, do quickly." No one at the table understood what he meant by these words, but thought that, as Judas had charge of the money, Jesus

had sent him to buy something for the feast, or else to give some money to the poor.

After Judas had gone out, Jesus had a long talk with his eleven disciples. As he spoke of soon going away from them, Peter asked, "Whither goest thou?" Jesus answered, "Whither I go thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterwards."

Peter cried out: "Lord, why cannot I follow thee even now? I will lay down my life for thee." Although Peter spoke so boldly, Jesus knew how weak he would be when the hour of trial came, and so he said to him: "Wilt thou lay down thy life for me? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice."

As the disciples sat about him, and began to realize that in some way, as yet they knew not how, their beloved Master was to leave them, they were very sorrowful. Jesus then began a tender discourse to them with these comforting words: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

He tried to cheer them with the thought that he would be separated from them for a little while only, and even when he was gone, he would help and guide them. He said, "If ye shall ask anything of the Father, he will give it you in my name."

Jesus also assured them that he would pray to the Father for them, and he ended his talk by saying, "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

Jesus then lifted up his eyes to heaven, and prayed earnestly that his Father would tenderly care for these disciples whom he loved. "I pray not," he said, "that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one." And he prayed that one day they might go to be with him and behold his glory.

After this Jesus went with his disciples over the brook Kidron, to the garden of Gethsemane. As he entered there he said to them, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder."

Taking with him three of his eleven disciples, Peter, James, and John, he went to a more retired place in the garden, and said to them, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto

death : tarry ye here, and watch with me." And he went forward a little and fell on his face and prayed, saying, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me : nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

When Jesus went back to his disciples, he found them sleeping, and he said to Peter : "What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation : the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done."

When he returned he found the disciples again sleeping, for "their eyes were heavy."

When Jesus returned from his place of prayer the third time, he found them again asleep, and he said, "Sleep on now and take your rest : behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."

But the disciples could sleep no more, for even as Jesus was speaking, they heard the noise of a great multitude coming with swords and staves from the chief priests ; and Judas, one of their own number, was leading them on. He knew

the Master's retreat in the garden, for Jesus had often gone there with his disciples. As those who were sent to arrest him would not recognize Jesus in the dark, Judas had agreed to give them a sign, and walking boldly up to him he said, "Hail, Master!" and kissed him.

Jesus, knowing what was about to happen, went forward and calmly asked them, "Whom seek ye?" They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said, "I am he."

Something in his face as he said this struck terror to their hearts, "and they went backward and fell upon the ground."

Again Jesus asked, "Whom seek ye?" and they replied as before, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus replied, "I told you I am he."

In this hour of trial, his disciples, instead of bravely standing by their Master, "all forsook him and fled."

Jesus was led by the soldiers to the house of Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and elders were gathered together. But Peter followed him afar off into the court of the high priest, and entered in and sat with the officers to see the end.

The chief priests and the council of the Sanhedrim, before whom Jesus was brought, sought to find some witness against him, so they might

put him to death. Many witnesses came, but none who told the truth could say aught against him. At last they found two men, who testified, "This man said, I am able to destroy the Temple of God, and to build it in three days." The high priest said to Jesus, "Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?" Jesus gave no answer then, but when the high priest said, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ of God," he replied, "Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

The high priest then, as a sign of horror, rent his garments, saying, "He hath spoken blasphemy: what think ye?" They answered, "He is worthy of death."

And then they began to treat him in a shameful manner, and to spit in his face, and buffet him; some of them struck him with their hands, and told him to prophesy who it was that struck him.

While this was going on, Peter was sitting out in the court, and one of the maids came to him and said, "Thou also wast with Jesus the Galilean."

But he denied before them all, saying, "I know not what thou sayest." As Peter went out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said to those who were there, "This man also was with Jesus the Nazarene."

This time Peter denied with an oath, and said, "I know not the man." After a while they that stood by came and said to Peter, "Of a truth thou art one of them, for thy speech bewrayeth thee." For the third time he began to curse and swear, "I know not the man," and straightway the cock crew.

Peter remembered the words which Jesus had said, "Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice," and we cannot wonder that he went out and wept bitterly.

Another council of the chief priests and elders was held the next morning, and it was then decided that Jesus must be put to death. So they bound him and sent him away to Pontius Pilate, who was the Roman governor of the province.

When Judas learned that the Master whom he had betrayed was condemned to die, he repented, and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying to them, "I have sinned in that I betrayed innocent blood."

But they said, "What is that to us? see thou to it."

Judas was so filled with horror at what he had done, that he threw down the thirty pieces of silver, and went away and hanged himself. As this money was the price of blood, the chief priests could not put it back into the treasury, and so they bought with it a piece of ground, as a burying-place for strangers.

When Jesus was brought before Pilate, he asked him, saying, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" And Jesus said unto him, "Thou sayest." But when the chief priests and elders asked him, he answered nothing. Pilate was surprised at his silence; and said to him, "Hearst thou not how many things they witness against thee?" But Jesus gave him no answer, not even a word, insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.

Now at their yearly feast Pilate was wont to release unto the people one prisoner, whichever one they might choose. Barabbas, a noted robber, was lying in prison at that time, so Pilate asked the Jews, "Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?"

He felt sure that Jesus was innocent, and that it was only from envy that the Jews wanted

to kill him. Even while Pilate was sitting there in the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, "Have thou nothing to do with that righteous man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him."

The chief priests and elders were so determined that Jesus should die, that they persuaded the multitude, when Pilate asked again, "Whether of the twain shall I release unto you?" to answer, "Barabbas."

Pilate then asked, "What then shall I do unto Jesus which is called Christ?" They all cried out, "Let him be crucified." He said to them, "Why, what evil hath he done?" But they cried out more exceedingly, "Let him be crucified!"

These accusers of Jesus were getting so furious that the governor feared a tumult. He felt that Jesus was innocent, and yet he wanted to pacify and please the people. So he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man: see ye to it."

And then all the people answered in these fearful words, "His blood be on us, and on our children."

Barabbas was then released, and Jesus was ordered to be scourged, and delivered to be crucified.

THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS

WHEN at last Pilate decided to condemn Jesus to death, he gave him in charge of the soldiers, and they took him into the palace where the rest of their band were gathered. And there they stripped him of his garments and put upon him a purple robe of the color that kings wore; and they plaited a crown of thorns, and put it upon his head; and kneeling down before him, as if paying honor to a monarch, they said, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

And after they had mocked him in this way, they took off the purple robe, and putting on his own garments, "they led him away to crucify him."

Jesus was able at first to carry his cross, but he soon became faint and sank under the burden. Just then Simon, a man of Cyrenè, came that way, and they compelled him to take the cross and bear it after Jesus.

The sad procession wended its way outside of the city walls to a place called Golgotha, and

there Jesus was nailed to the cross between two thieves, who were to suffer death at the same time.

Pilate had ordered a title written to be placed over the cross, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." As this title was in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, all the people who were gathered there could read it. When the Jews saw what was written, they were displeased, and went to Pilate and said, "Write not, 'The King of the Jews,' but that he said, 'I am King of the Jews.'"

But Pilate, who had perhaps become tired of these fault-finding people, would not grant their request, but said to them, "What I have written, I have written," meaning that he would make no alteration now.

The soldiers were entitled to the clothing of those who were crucified, and so they took the garments of Jesus and made four parts, to every soldier a part; but the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore, "Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be."

By this act the words of the prophet were fulfilled, which said of their Messiah, "They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots."

The Jews showed their hatred of Jesus to the

last, although, in his first agony upon the cross, he prayed for them, saying, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Now as they passed by him, they railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying: "Thou that destroyest the Temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross."

Likewise also, the chief priests, mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said: "He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God."

And even one of the thieves who were crucified with him railed on him, saying, "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us." But the other one rebuked him, and said: "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss." And he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." With what joy must this sinner have heard Jesus answer, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

At the sixth hour a strange darkness came over the land, which lasted until the ninth hour. The earth quaked, as though trembling for the dreadful deed that was being done. In the Temple at Jerusalem the priests who were there saw with horror that the beautiful veil which hid the Holy of Holies was torn from the top to the bottom.

But the hour for ending the sufferings of Jesus had now come, and crying out with a loud voice, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," he breathed his last.

There were no mocking voices about the cross now, for the faces of those who stood there were pale with fear. When the Roman centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, and said, "Truly this was the Son of God." It is said that all the multitudes who were there, when they beheld the things that were done, "returned smiting their breasts."

The Jews were in haste to remove the bodies from the cross, as their Sabbath was near at hand, and none of them were allowed to touch a dead body on that day. They cruelly broke the legs of the thieves, in order to hasten the end; but when they came to Jesus, they were surprised to find that he was already dead. They wished to be quite sure of this, so one of



THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS.

From a painting by Rubens.

the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and blood and water flowed from the wound. It was said of him by the prophets who wrote about him so many years before, "A bone of him shall not be broken," and, "They shall look on him whom they pierced."

Among the disciples of Jesus was Joseph of Arimathea, who was a rich man and a member of the Jewish council. He was the owner of a new tomb which had been hewn from the rocks, and in which no one had ever lain. This tomb was in a garden near the place where Jesus was crucified, and Joseph wished to lay him there. He was fearful that the Jews might prevent him from doing so if they knew of it, so he went to Pilate secretly, and asked if he might "take the body of Jesus away: and he gave him leave."

Besides Mary Magdalene, to whom Jesus had forgiven so much, there were many other women who believed in him, and who, like Martha of Bethany, loved to minister to him.

They had come from far-away Galilee, and were among those who stood beholding Jesus on the cross. And now they followed him to his burial, for they wished to know just how he was laid in the tomb. They wanted to do something more for the Master who was gone,

so they returned to their homes to prepare spices for anointing his body when the proper time should come.

The next day the chief priests and rulers went to Pilate with another trouble. They said to him: "Sir, we remember that that deceiver said while he was yet alive, After three days I rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest haply his disciples come and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: and the last error will be worse than the first." Pilate said unto them, "Ye have a guard: go your way, make it as sure as ye can." So they went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, the guard being with them.

There had been no time to anoint the body of Jesus as the custom was, and so, as soon as the Jewish Sabbath was past, on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other women who had prepared spices went very early in the morning to the tomb of Jesus to anoint him. While on the way there they were saying to themselves, "Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the tomb?" It was large, and they would be unable to move it without help. But lo! when they reached the

tomb they found the stone rolled away. For we are told that an angel had descended from heaven and rolled the stone away. "His appearance was as lightning, and his raiment as white as snow." The angel was still at the tomb, and he said unto the women: "Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus which hath been crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, even as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples, He is risen from the dead; and lo he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you."

While they were hurrying along to tell their glad news, Jesus met them, and said, "All hail." Their hearts were filled with joy and fear when they saw their Master, and "they took hold of his feet and worshipped him." He said to them, "Fear not: go tell my brethren that they depart into Galilee, and there shall they see me."

While they were on their way, some of the guard who were so frightened because of the earthquake went into the city to tell the chief priests what had happened. A council was quickly held with the elders, to see what should be done. It would never do for the true story to be told abroad. So they gave

the soldiers who guarded the tomb a large sum of money, and told them if they were questioned about the matter, to say, "His disciples came by night and stole him away while we slept."

It would be a great risk for these guards to own that they had slept at their post. And so the chief priests and elders said that if anything came to the governor's ears, they would persuade him that everything was right, and thus the soldiers would be free from all blame in the matter.

On the afternoon of this day two of the disciples were talking together on their way to Emmaus, a village about seven miles from Jerusalem.

Their hearts were heavy with grief and disappointment, for the Master, whom they had followed so closely, and whom they so dearly loved, had been taken from them. They could think of nothing else, and so they were talking over all the sad things which had happened in the last few days. As they were thus talking, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, "What communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" And one of

them, named Cleopas, answering, said unto him, "Dost thou sojourn in Jerusalem, and not know the things which are come to pass in these days?" And he said unto them, "What things?" \

And they said, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet, mighty in deeds and words before God and all the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we hoped that it was he which should redeem Israel. Yea, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things came to pass. Moreover certain women of our company amazed us, having been early at the tomb; and when they found not his body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them that were with us went to the tomb, and found it even so as the women had said: but they saw him not."

When Jesus had heard their story, he said to them, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

By this time they had come to the village, and, as Jesus seemed about to pass on, they

urged him to remain, saying, "Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is now far spent." And so Jesus granted their wish and went in to abide with them.

Their simple evening meal was quickly prepared; and when Jesus sat down to eat with them, "he took the bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them." Then the eyes of the disciples were opened. It was their dear Master, with whom they had so often broken bread before. How much they had to say to him, and how they would enjoy his company!

But lo! as they turned to greet him, he "vanished out of their sight."

They wondered now why they should not have known him. They said to each other, "Was not our heart burning within us, while he spake to us in the way, while he opened to us the Scriptures?"

They must tell the glad tidings to the other disciples, and forgetting how weary they were from their long walk, "they rose up that very hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them." All these were saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." And then the two disciples told of all the things that had happened on their way to Emmaus, and

how their hearts burned in them as Jesus was talking, and how he was known to them in the breaking of bread.

Even while they were speaking of these things, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace be unto you."

But "they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed they had beheld a spirit." And he said, "Why are ye troubled? and wherefore do reasonings arise in your heart?" And showing them his hands and his feet, he said, "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." And while they still disbelieved for joy, and wonder, he asked, "Have ye anything to eat?" And they gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it, and did eat before them.

And Jesus tried to explain to them how that all the things that Moses and the prophets said should happen to him had been fulfilled. Then it was that he opened their minds, and gave them the wisdom which they needed to understand the Scriptures.

He said to them, "Thus it is written, that Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day."

They had seen all this happen, and so they

were to go forth and be his witnesses, and call all nations to repent and believe on him.

But Thomas, one of the disciples, was not present in the upper room at that time, and when the others afterward said to him, "We have seen the Lord," he couldn't believe them. He replied, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

After eight days the disciples again met, and although the doors were closed, they suddenly found that Jesus was standing among them, and saying as before, "Peace be unto you." Then speaking to Thomas, he said, "Reach hither thy finger, and see my hands; and reach hither thy hand and put it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing."

Jesus remained upon earth forty days, appearing from time to time unto his disciples, and comforting their hearts with his presence and with the precious truths which he taught them.

At length, on a day appointed, Jesus met his eleven disciples on the Mount of Olives, and when they saw him, they worshipped him. How eagerly they listened to his last words! "All authority," he said, "hath been given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and

make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

And he lifted up his hands and blessed them, and, as they were looking, "he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight."

As they remained there, gazing upward until they could see him no longer, behold, two men stood beside them in white apparel, saying: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? This Jesus, which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye behold him going into heaven."

After these comforting words, the disciples returned with joy to the upper room in Jerusalem, which now had become so dear to them. There they often met for praise and prayer, and to prepare for the work which Jesus had left them to do in the world.

THE STORY OF SIMON PETER

THIS man, who became one of the first disciples of Jesus, bore the name of Simon, and was the son of Jonas, or John, a fisherman on the Sea of Tiberias. He was brought up in the business of his father, and he and his brother Andrew were partners with James and John, the sons of Zebedee.

The common fishermen of the country lived in rude huts by the shore of the sea, but Simon was not a day laborer, for he could afford a house, first at Bethsaida, and then at Capernaum. He was living in the latter town at the time that Jesus cured his wife's mother of a fever.

Andrew had been a disciple of John the Baptist, and had heard of Jesus. Perhaps he was present at his baptism, and heard John exclaim, as he saw Jesus coming to him, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." He had learned who Jesus was, and believed in him as the Christ whom all were expecting. One day he came to his brother Simon with the good news, "We

have found the Messiah;" and he brought him to Jesus, who welcomed him kindly, and said to him, "Thou art Simon the son of John; thou shalt be called Cephas," or Peter, as it would be called in the Greek language. This became his name ever after, and he felt from that time that he had been called to be a disciple of Jesus. This call made but little difference at first in Peter's daily life. He attended as usual to his business, but often sought his new Master to hear his gracious words.

But by and by Peter received a second call from Jesus. He and his brother Andrew were one day fishing in their boat on the Sea of Galilee, when Jesus came walking along the shore, and called to them, saying, "Come after me and I will make you fishers of men." And it is said they "straightway left their nets and followed him." Soon after Jesus entered Peter's boat, and spoke from it to the crowds of people who were gathered upon the shore to hear him.

Peter attended Jesus quite often after this, as he went about from place to place healing the sick and teaching the people.

The time came when Jesus needed more helpers in his work, and then he appointed twelve men to be his apostles, and Peter seems

to have been always foremost among them. When Jesus sometimes asked these apostles a question, it was Peter always who seemed the first to answer. At one time some of his disciples, not understanding his words, became dissatisfied and left him. When Jesus said to the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" it was Peter who answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

From this time Peter was known as the firmest and most loyal friend of Jesus. Sometimes, in his zeal to serve him, he was too rash and impulsive.

Once Jesus was teaching the people of what would befall him later on. He told them that he must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and the chief priests and the rulers, and be killed, and after three days rise again. Peter loved Jesus so much, and had such faith in his power, that he thought such dreadful things could not possibly happen to him. And he dared to rebuke Jesus for speaking these things so openly. Jesus was obliged to reprove Peter for his rashness, and said to him, "Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men."

It was not long after this that Jesus chose Peter and two others of his disciples to go with him upon the mountain, and see a vision of his glory. Peter seems to have misunderstood this vision, for when Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Jesus, he thought they had come to remain with them, and he wanted to build there three tabernacles in which his Master and these heavenly visitors might live.

Sometimes Peter relied too much on his own strength, and lost faith in Jesus. One night Jesus surprised his disciples, who were out upon the Sea of Galilee, by walking toward them on the water. They were afraid at first, but when they heard his well-known voice say, "Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid," their fear was turned into joy. Peter cried out, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee on the waters." And when Jesus said "Come," Peter went down from the boat, and walked upon the waters to go to him. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me." Jesus stretched forth his hand, and said to Peter, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" As soon as he lost his faith in the power of Jesus to keep him, he sank in the water, and cried out for help.

Peter's zeal for his Master seemed to grow

stronger as time went on, but it was not always shown in the wisest way. When, at the Last Supper, Jesus told his disciples that one of them should betray him, Peter was more anxious than any of them to know whom he meant, and wanted Jesus to point the traitor out. Peter was probably one of the disciples who were striving at that time for the best place at the table. When Jesus left it and began washing the disciples' feet, Peter was much astonished, and when it became his turn, he asked with wonder and shame, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?"

Jesus answered, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt understand hereafter." But Peter wished to know all about it then, and cried out, in his impulsive way, "Thou shalt never wash my feet."

But when Jesus said to him, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me," then he not only wanted his feet washed, but his hands and his head also.

Peter assured Jesus one day that he would follow him gladly wherever he went, and that he would lay down his life for him. It was then that Jesus told him, that before the cock should crow in the morning he would three times deny him.

All this happened as Jesus said, and Peter

had hardly spoken his third denial when the cock crew, and then, as he remembered his Master's words, a great wave of sorrow swept over him, and he "went out and wept bitterly."

Peter and John were the first of his disciples to whom Mary Magdalene brought the news of Jesus' resurrection. They both ran with all haste to the tomb, but John reached there first, and, looking in, found it empty. When Peter arrived he was not satisfied with looking in, but he entered the tomb; and finding the linen grave-clothes of Jesus lying there, he knew then that his Lord was indeed gone.

Jesus appeared many times to his disciples after his resurrection. One day when a number of them had gone out fishing upon the Sea of Galilee, they saw Jesus standing upon the beach, just as the sun was rising.

He called out to them, "Children, have ye anything to eat?" They were obliged to answer "No," for they had been toiling all night, and had taken no fish. Jesus said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and ye shall find."

They did as he directed, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. One of the disciples said to Peter, "It is the Lord." When he heard that, he was too im-

patient to wait for a boat to take him to land, "but girt his coat about him and cast himself into the sea." It was near the shore, and Peter reached it in safety, while the others came to land in their little boat.

They found a fire of coals already there, with some bread and fish cooking upon it. Jesus told them first to bring the fish they had just taken.

Simon Peter, therefore, went up and drew the net to land, full of great fishes, a hundred and fifty-three; and for all there were so many the net was not rent.

Then Jesus said to them, "Come and break your fast." They all gladly obeyed him, for they had been working all night, and must have been very hungry. Jesus served them with the bread and fish. They knew it was their Lord, and none of them dared ask him, "Who art thou?"

After they had eaten, Jesus turned to Peter and said, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these?" He saith unto him, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." He saith unto him, "Feed my lambs." Then Jesus saith to him again the second time, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou me?" He saith unto him, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee."

He saith unto him, "Tend my sheep." Then Jesus saith unto him the third time, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou me?" Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, "Lovest thou me?" And he said unto him, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Jesus saith unto him, "Feed my sheep."

Perhaps it was because Peter had three times denied his Lord, that Jesus asked him three times so solemnly if he really loved him.

Then Jesus told Peter of what should happen to him in the future. He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young thou girdedst thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not."

Jesus meant by saying this "by what manner of death he should glorify God." Peter was not satisfied to know about himself, but seeing John standing near, he said to Jesus, "Lord, and what shall this man do?"

Jesus did not answer Peter's question directly, but assured him that what should happen to John was no concern of his. "What is that to thee?" he said; "follow thou me."

One of Jesus' last commands to his disciples was for them to meet together in Jerusalem and there wait until the Holy Spirit should come to comfort and instruct them. Peter seems now to have taken the lead among the apostles, and it was he who proposed that they should choose another to take the place of Judas, who had so miserably fallen by betraying his Master. And the lot fell upon Matthias, who then was numbered with the eleven.

On the day of Pentecost, they were all gathered in the upper room at Jerusalem, where they had so often met. "And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

A great crowd of people was there, from many foreign cities, and when every man heard the disciples speaking in his own language, they were all amazed and marvelled, saying: "Behold, are not all these that speak Galileans? And how hear we, every man in our own language, wherein we were born?"

A strange and wonderful thing had happened, and they said one to another, "What meaneth this?" Others, who had no faith in its being a work of God, accused the apostles of drunkenness, and said, "They are filled with new wine." But Peter, who knew this was the coming of the Spirit that Jesus had promised, boldly denied that any of their number were drunken with wine, but said, "This is that which hath been spoken of by the prophet Joel." And then he preached to the people in such earnest words that three thousand of them believed on Jesus and were baptized.

The apostles were still regular in their worship at the Temple in Jerusalem. One day, as Peter and John were about to enter the Beautiful Gate, they saw a lame man sitting there, and he asked them to give him money. Peter said to the man, "Look on us," and he gave heed to them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said: "Silver and gold have I none; but what I have that give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." And he took him by the hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And leaping up, he stood and began to walk; and he entered with them into the Temple, walking, and leaping, and praising

God. The people who had seen him sitting day after day at the Beautiful Gate asking for help, "were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened to him." When Peter saw the crowd looking with such wonder upon himself, he told them that it was not by the apostles' own power that this man had been made to walk. And he preached to them about Jesus of Nazareth, and boldly told them that they had killed the "Holy and Righteous One."

This speech of Peter was reported to the high priest, and he had the apostles brought before the council the next day. The council spoke to them in regard to the lame man, and asked them, "By what power, or in what name, have ye done this?" Peter answered: "Ye rulers of the people, and elders, if we this day be examined concerning a good deed done to an impotent man, by what means this man is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even in him doth this man stand here before you whole. He is the stone which was set at naught of you the builders, which was made the head of the corner. And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any

other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved."

The members of the council were astonished at the boldness of Peter and John, and wondered how men, whom they had always looked upon as unlearned and ignorant, could speak in this way. It was in this manner that Jesus spake, "and they took knowledge that these apostles had been with him."

The chief priests were now afraid of the apostles, who dared to speak the truth so boldly. They said to each other, "What shall we do to these men?" They could not deny that a great miracle had been done, for the lame man was standing there, and as able to walk as any of the others. Something must be done to stop this work from going on any farther. So they called Peter and John, and charged them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus. But the apostles would give no promise. They said, "We cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard."

After this Peter went boldly forth, preaching everywhere, and healing all the sick people who were brought to him. So many believed in his healing power, that they even carried their sick friends out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, so that as Peter

went by at least his shadow might fall upon them.

There was a good woman in Joppa named Dorcas, who believed in Jesus and tried to follow him in doing good. One day the sad news went abroad that she was dead. Her friends sent in haste for Peter, saying to him, "Delay not to come unto us." And when he had come, they brought him into the upper chamber, and all the widows stood by him, weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them.

But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning to the body, he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. And as this became known throughout Joppa, many believed on the Lord.

Peter now seems to have given his whole time to the preaching of the gospel of Jesus. In doing this he went to many different places, where he formed churches. He visited Antioch, and there he found many who believed on Jesus, and these he received into the church. These people were Gentiles, and the Christian Jews thought they were unfit, on this account, to join their church.

There was so much said about this in Jerusalem that Peter went there to explain the matter. He told them he had seen a wonderful vision, which taught him that God made no distinction in people; that whoever believed on Jesus, of whatever nation, would be accepted.

Not long after this, King Herod, who was a most wicked and cruel man, began a persecution of the Christians. And finding that this pleased the Jews, he seized Peter also and put him in prison. His friends in the church were so anxious for his life that they prayed earnestly to God for him.

He was securely bound in the prison with chains. One night, when the guards were keeping the door as usual, and Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, an angel appeared. A bright light filled the cell, and the angel smote Peter upon the side, and awoke him, saying, "Rise up quickly." As he did so, the chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said to him, "Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals;" and he did so. And he said unto him, "Cast thy garment about thee and follow me," and he went out and followed him.

Peter thought that it could not be true, that he was free from his chains, but that it must be a dream. He still went on with the angel.

And when they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth into the city; which opened to them of its own accord: and they went out and passed on through one street: and straightway the angel departed from him.

And when Peter was come to himself, he said, "Now I know of a truth that the Lord hath sent forth his angel and delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews." And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together and were praying. And when he knocked at the door of the gate, a maid came to answer, named Rhoda. And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for joy, but ran in and told that Peter stood before the gate. And they said unto her, "Thou art mad." But she confidently affirmed that it was even so. And they said, "It is his angel."

But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened, they saw him, and were amazed. But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him forth out of the prison. And he said, "Tell these things

unto James, and to the brethren." And he departed, and went to another place.

Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the guards, and commanded that they should be put to death.

Peter was spared many years to work for the Master he loved, and to preach the gospel. He founded churches in many places, and to these he wrote letters, only two of which are found in the Bible. In these letters he tried to comfort and strengthen his friends, in the many trials that believers in Jesus had to suffer in those days. Some hold that the last year of his life he went to Rome, and, together with Paul, founded the church in that city.

During the dreadful persecution in the reign of the Roman emperor Nero, he was taken prisoner and condemned to be crucified. There is a tradition, that by his own wish he was placed upon the cross with his head downward, believing himself unworthy to suffer in the same manner that Jesus did.

Peter lived a grand and noble life, and we think of him now as sharing the joys of heaven with the Master he loved.

THE APOSTLE PAUL

THIS man, who is known to us in the Bible as the Apostle to the Gentiles, was born in Tarsus, a city of Cilicia. His father was a Hebrew, of the tribe of Benjamin, and belonged to the sect of the Pharisees. He was also a Roman citizen, but we are not told how he obtained that privilege, whether he bought it, and paid a great price for it, as many others did, or whether he gained it by performing some special service for the Roman government.

His son was freeborn to this honor, and was given the Jewish name of Saul; and he lived through his boyhood in Tarsus. This was a fine seaport in the Mediterranean Sea, and was a busy and flourishing place. Many Hebrews lived there, and they had their own private schools, and worshipped in their Jewish synagogues on the Sabbath.

It is quite likely that young Saul attended one of these schools in his early boyhood. But he tells us in one of his speeches, that, although born in Tarsus, he was brought up in Jerusalem.

His parents wanted him to be thoroughly trained as a Jewish scholar, so as to be fitted for a rabbi when he grew up. As there was a famous doctor of the law in Jerusalem called Gamaliel, Saul was sent there when a boy to become his pupil. While living there he heard of the strange prophet who was known as Jesus of Nazareth, and how that the truths which he taught were more and more believed in by those who called themselves his disciples. Like the rest of the Jews, Saul believed Jesus to have been an impostor, and one who had suffered justly, because he had blasphemed against God.

The believers in Jesus grew so fast in numbers that there were many thousands of them in Jerusalem, and when a large church was formed there, the Jews began to fear their power.

This church appointed seven men to assist the apostles in their work, and among them was Stephen, a young Greek, who was a Jew in his belief, but who had learned to love and serve Jesus. This Stephen went about preaching boldly in the name of his Master, and Saul had probably been one of his hearers. We are told that some of them from Cilicia, the country where Saul was born, disputed with Stephen about the new doctrines. It is not impossible that Saul was one of them.

When Stephen was condemned to die by stoning, and so became the first Christian martyr, Saul, it is said, was consenting unto his death, and he was the one who took charge of the clothing of those who cast the first stones.

Saul thought that all who believed in Jesus should suffer death as Stephen had, and he was so in earnest about this that he began at once to arrest people and bring them before the Jewish rulers. In this dreadful persecution, at Jerusalem, Saul is said to have "laid waste the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison." He was so full of zeal in this cruel work that he asked for letters from the high priest, giving him permission to go to Damascus, and if he found any there who believed in Jesus, whether they were men or women, to bring them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

It was quite a long journey to Damascus, but at last the city, which from a distance is always described as very beautiful, came in sight. Saul was no doubt very glad that he was near the end of his journey, and was perhaps making plans to begin his work there at once. But suddenly there shone round about him a light out of heaven : and he fell upon the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, "Saul, Saul, why

persecutest thou me ?” And he said, “ Who art thou, Lord ?” And he said, “ I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest : but rise and enter the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.” And the men that journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but beholding no man. And Saul arose from the earth ; and when his eyes were opened, he saw nothing ; and they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink.

Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias ; and the Lord said unto him in a vision, “ Ananias.” And he said, “ Behold, I am here, Lord.” And the Lord said unto him, “ Arise, and go to the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one named Saul, a man of Tarsus : for behold, he prayeth ; and he hath seen a man named Ananias coming in, and laying his hands on him, that he might receive his sight.” But Ananias answered, “ Lord, I have heard from many of this man, how much evil he did to thy saints at Jerusalem : and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call upon thy name.” But the Lord said unto him, “ Go thy way : for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of

Israel: for I will show how many things he must suffer for my name's sake."

And Ananias departed and entered into the house: and laying his hands on him, said, "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way which thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And straightway there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he received his sight; and he arose and was baptized; and he took food and was strengthened.

Saul had now become a new man, and instead of going into the synagogue to arrest people who believed in Jesus, he went there as a believer himself, and began to proclaim Jesus as the Son of God. And all that heard him were amazed, and said, "Is not this he that in Jerusalem made havoc of them which called on this name? and he had come hither for this intent, that he might bring them bound before the chief priests?"

But Saul became every day stronger in the faith, and he confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the Christ.

Saul was becoming a dangerous man and must not be allowed to teach this new religion, so the Jews took counsel to kill him, and watched

the gates night and day, that they might arrest him. But some of Saul's friends heard of their plan, and as he lodged in a house upon the city walls, they placed him in a basket and lowered him out of the window upon the wall, and in this way he escaped.

When Saul returned to Jerusalem he went to the disciples and wanted to join the church there. But they were afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. At length his friend Barnabas told the apostles that the Lord had spoken to Saul in a wonderful way, and that he was really a changed man, and had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. They were very glad then to receive him, and he stayed for some time in Jerusalem, where by his learning he was able to dispute with the Grecian Jews. But as they sought to kill him, he had to flee from the city, and his life began to be in danger everywhere.

Saul started upon his first missionary journey with Barnabas, and John Mark, who was the latter's nephew. They went first to Cyprus, which was once the home of Barnabas, and when they had gone through the whole island they came to Paphos; and there they found a sorcerer who was deceiving the people.

And Saul, who was filled with the Holy Spirit,

fastened his eyes upon him, and reproved him severely, and said to him, "Behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season." This at once happened as the apostle said, and the man went about seeking some one to lead him. Sergius Paulus, the Roman proconsul of the island, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

From this time Saul appears to have become the leader, instead of Barnabas; and as if to show that he had taken a new place, he was ever afterward called by the name of Paul.

In pursuing their journey they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and it being the Sabbath day, they went into the synagogue there, and sat down. After the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them saying, "Brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on."

Then Paul rose, and beckoning with his hand to gain their attention, he spoke earnestly to them of the new Way. He told them that God had fulfilled all the precious promises made to his people, by the sending of his Son Jesus into the world.

"Be it known unto you, brethren," he said, "that through this man is proclaimed unto you

remission of sins: and by him every one that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." This was indeed good news, and it spread so fast that on the next Sabbath the whole city gathered to hear the word of God.

But the Jews were jealous when they saw the crowds that came to hear the apostles preach, and they contradicted the words of Paul, and even blasphemed. Paul assured them that it was right for them, being Jews, to have this gospel preached first to them; but as they would not hear, and themselves were unworthy of eternal life, "lo," he said, "we turn to the Gentiles."

These Gentiles, who had been eagerly listening to Paul, were glad when they heard this, and many of them believed, and glorified God. But the Jews were so angry that they stirred up a persecution against the apostles, and cast them out of their borders.

At the next place to which they went, and where they preached to great crowds, another persecution was raised against them; and when they found they were in danger of being stoned, they fled to the cities of Lycaonia.

When they reached Lystra, they found a lame man who had been a cripple from his birth, and had never walked. Paul saw how earnestly this

man was listening to his words, and knew he had faith enough to be made whole. So Paul said to him, with a loud voice, "Stand upright upon thy feet." And he leaped up and walked.

When the people saw this they cried out in their language, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men." Among the gods in whom they believed, Jupiter was thought to be the most powerful; so they called Barnabas by his name, and Paul, who was probably small and of less commanding appearance, they named Mercury.

Jupiter had a temple in the city, and the priest who served him brought oxen and garlands into the gates, and would have made sacrifice with the multitude.

But when Barnabas and Paul heard of it they sprang forth among them, crying out: "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and bring you good tidings, that ye should turn from these vain things unto the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that in them is."

The apostles could scarcely keep these people from worshipping them as gods, but the people soon lost their good opinion. The Jews who had treated them so shamefully in Antioch and Iconium came and told such evil things of them,

that they "stoned Paul, and dragged him out of the city, supposing he was dead." But soon, while the disciples were standing about him, he revived, and was able to proceed upon his journey the next day.

The apostles returned at last to Antioch, from which city they had first started, and as they came to the places where they had taught the people, they visited them again to comfort their hearts, and strengthen them in their new faith.

By and by Paul started on a second missionary journey, and having separated from Barnabas and his nephew, who had gone another way, he took Silas as his companion, and Timothy, a young man who had become a believer in Lystra.

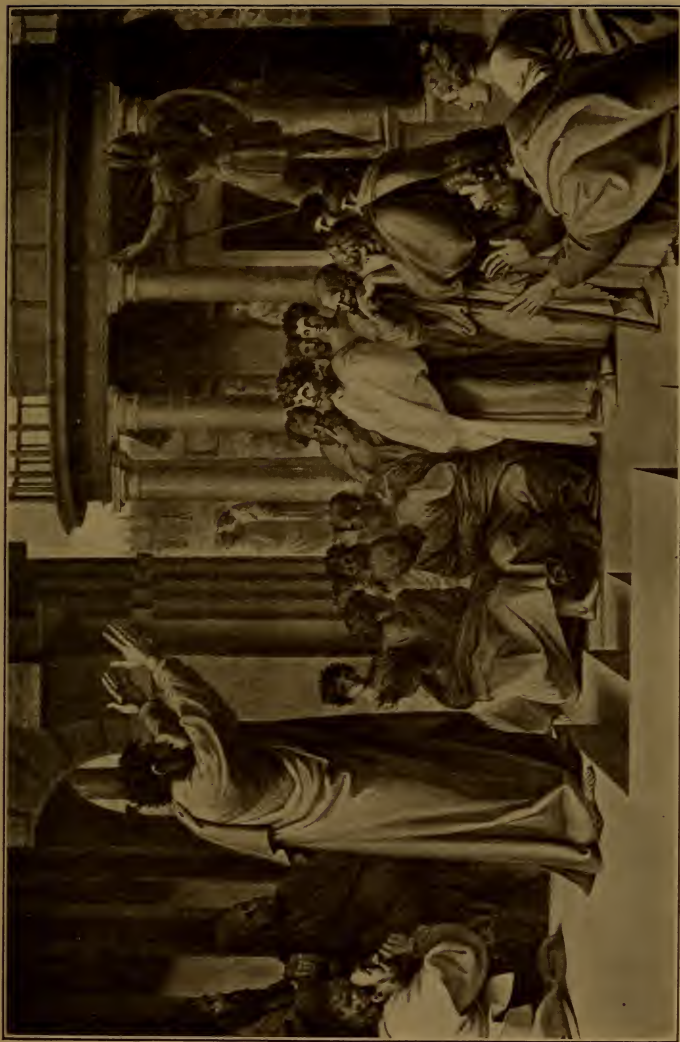
After travelling to many different places, and preaching wherever people would gather to hear him, he came at last to Troas, where he had a vision which altogether changed his plans. As he was sleeping one night near the shore of the Ægean Sea, he saw a man standing on the opposite shore, beckoning to him, and crying out, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us."

Paul rightly believed this to be a call from God, and the very next day he crossed the sea, and began for the first time to work for his Master in Europe. As he went from city to

city the people heard him gladly, and many churches were formed in the cities of Greece.

At Athens he interested the people so much that they wanted to hear more about the new faith, and so he preached to them from Mars Hill a most wonderful sermon. He assured his hearers that the Unknown God whose altar he had seen in their city was the One who had made the world and all things therein. That even their own poets had said, "For we are also his offspring." They listened quietly for a while, but when he urged them to believe in and serve this God, who would one day be their judge, and when he spoke to them of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, and others said, "We will hear thee concerning this again." Very few believed his message, and Paul never again visited Athens.

At Corinth many of the people lived very wicked and impure lives, and cared not to hear of a religion which condemned all such things. The Jews there were so bitter against Paul that he was forced to leave their synagogues, and feared that he would be obliged to leave the city also. But the Lord appeared to him in the night, saying, "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee; and no man shall set on thee to harm thee: for I have



PAUL PREACHING AT ATHENS.

From a painting by Raphael.

much people in this city." Paul was so encouraged by these words, and he worked so faithfully, that soon there were enough believers to form a church.

Paul afterward made a third missionary journey, visiting many of the cities of Asia Minor. At Ephesus he had an exciting experience. That was considered a sacred city, for it contained a magnificent temple of the goddess Diana. This idol was believed to have fallen from heaven, and many pilgrims came every year to Ephesus to worship her. The silver-smiths made and sold to these pilgrims a great number of little silver images of the goddess.

At the preaching of Paul so many began to believe in the religion of Jesus that these silver-smiths lost much of their trade. This made them so angry that they raised a mob against Paul, and obliged him to leave the city. But enough people had believed in Christ to form a church, and one of the most learned and interesting of Paul's letters was written to the Ephesians.

These letters of the apostle were written to many others of the churches which he founded. He loved and cared for them all, and whenever they needed advice, or were troubled about any matter, he would help them by sending them a

letter written by his own hand, or by some one else to whom he gave the message.

After many years' wandering in these foreign cities, Paul felt that he must go once more to Jerusalem. His friends tried to dissuade him from doing this, for they knew that he had many bitter enemies there, who would seek to take his life. But he would not listen to them, and kept steadily on in his homeward journey.

He arrived at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, when the city was full of Jews from all parts of the world. One day he went into the Temple, and some of the Ephesian Jews who had known of his work in that city recognized him, and cried out against him as a heretic. They said he had blasphemed against the Jewish nation and their law, and they raised such a tumult that he was nearly killed right there in the court of the Jews. Before they could bring him into the Gentile court of the Temple some Roman guards who had heard the noise rushed to the place and took him into their charge.

When Paul protested against this treatment, and cried out that he was a Roman citizen, the soldiers were more careful what they did to him, and lodged him safely in prison for protection from the Jews. But these people were so determined that Paul should die, that forty of them

took a solemn oath that they would neither eat nor drink until they had slain him.

Paul's nephew heard of this plot, and went and told his uncle of it in prison. And at Paul's request the centurion let the young man inform the chief captain; and he charged Paul's nephew to keep the matter secret. Then, to save Paul's life, the captain called unto him two centurions and said, "Make ready two hundred soldiers to go as far as Cæsarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night;" and he bade them provide beasts that they might set Paul thereon, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor. A letter was written to Felix telling all about Paul, and of what he was accused, and when the governor received it, and the prisoner was brought before him, he promised to attend to the matter soon.

Felix was kind to Paul, and even allowed his friends to visit him in the prison. In a few days he came with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess, and Paul was sent for to appear before them. He talked to them so plainly, as he reasoned of righteousness, and temperance, and the judgment to come, that Felix was terrified, and said to Paul, "Go thy way for this time:

and when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

Paul was kept in the prison at Cæsarea for two years, and when Festus, the new governor, came to rule the province, he found him a prisoner there.

After a certain time Paul was brought before Festus, who wanted to send him back to Jerusalem to be tried in a court there. But Paul knew that, as a citizen of Rome, his case ought to be tried by that government, and so he said to Festus, "I appeal unto Cæsar." An appeal to the emperor could not be set aside, so the governor was obliged to grant Paul's wish, and he was sent back to prison, to remain until he could be taken to Rome.

A few days after, King Agrippa, with his wife Bernice, came to the city with great pomp. Hearing that Festus had a remarkable prisoner in the city, he expressed a wish to see him. When Paul was brought before him, and the king said to him, "Thou art permitted to speak for thyself," Paul stretched forth his hand, and said, "I think myself happy, King Agrippa, that I am to make my defence before thee this day touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews."

And then he spoke in such an impressive way

of his former life, and of the wonderful manner in which he was brought to believe in Jesus, that Festus cried out, with a loud voice, "Paul, thou art mad: thy much learning doth turn thee to madness."

But Paul calmly answered, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." King Agrippa, as he listened, was apparently impressed by the truth himself, for he said to Paul, "With but little persuasion thou wouldest have made me a Christian," though probably not in earnest.

We cannot help admiring the grand answer which Paul made him. He said, "I would to God, that whether with little or with much, not thou only but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am, except these bonds."

As he said this he must have stretched forth his hands, showing the chains upon his wrists, for Roman prisoners were never for a moment left unchained.

King Agrippa felt quite sure that Paul had done "nothing worthy of death or of bonds," and he told Festus, "This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cæsar." As he had done this he must be sent to Rome, and very soon he was placed on board a ship which sailed for that city.

During the voyage a violent storm arose and they were shipwrecked, and cast upon the island of Melita. Had it not been for Paul, who had more wisdom and courage than any of the others, not a soul of their company would have been saved.

After three months Paul again set sail, and this time he had a prosperous and safe voyage. He must have felt somewhat sad and lonely as he came in sight of Rome, where he had often longed to work for Christ. He had become an old man now, and as he was a prisoner in chains, he could hope to do but little there.

At one of the small towns, as he was approaching the city, a band of Christians who had heard of his coming met to give him a welcome. And when, a few miles farther on, more of his friends came to greet him, he was so greatly cheered, that the Bible says, "he thanked God and took courage."

Although Paul was kept a prisoner in Rome, he was given a great deal of liberty. He was allowed to live in his own hired house, and could go about as he pleased, only that a soldier always attended him.

While a prisoner at Rome he taught all who came to him, and as his guard was changed every few hours, he had the chance to speak to

many different persons about the religion of Jesus. Believers soon began to grow in numbers, and many in the palace of the emperor became Christians. Paul wrote some of his grandest letters while in Rome, and they have been a comfort to Christian hearts ever since.

After two years he was brought to trial, and as nothing was found against him he was set at liberty. We learn that again he went about, teaching among the churches which he founded, and which he loved so much. But this peaceful and busy time lasted a little while only. The city of Rome was one day burned to the ground, and it was said that it was set on fire by the wicked emperor Nero himself. Whether this was true or not, he in turn laid the crime to the Christians, and there began from that time the most dreadful persecution.

It was not long before Paul was again arrested and sent back to Rome, and this time he was put in a prison cell. It was so damp and uncomfortable, that he wrote to Timothy, asking him to bring him a cloak which he left at Troas, to protect him from the cold. And he begged Timothy to come and see him once more; for he longed for a friend's sympathy. He had a peculiar affection for this young man, who was one of his first converts, and whom he had trained

for the ministry; and often spoke of him as his "beloved son."

But although Paul's imprisonment seemed a hopeless one, his courage never failed, and when he knew that he must soon die, he wrote to Timothy, "For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come;" and almost in the words of triumph he adds, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not only to me, but also to all them that have loved his appearing."

At his second trial, before Nero, Paul was sentenced to death, and he was led out of the city to the place appointed, followed by a noisy rabble, and there he was beheaded.

It seems a dreadful thing that Nero, who was a monster of wickedness, should have been allowed to put to death one of the best and purest men who ever lived. But it was a happy release to Paul, who at once received a martyr's crown, and was made one of the great company in heaven "who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

JOHN, THE BELOVED DISCIPLE

THE story of John, as we find it in the Bible, is somewhat brief, although he was one of the truest and most loyal of Christ's followers, and is always spoken of as "the disciple whom Jesus loved."

He was the son of Zebedee, and, with his brother James, was a fisherman, and a partner in business with Simon Peter and Andrew. They belonged to the better class of fishermen, and were able to employ servants to help them in their work.

We first hear of John on the day that Jesus called him with his brother James to leave their nets and follow him, telling them that he would make them fishers of men. We soon after read of these brothers in company with Peter following their Master, as he went about teaching in the synagogues or by the wayside. John was with the twelve as they listened to the Sermon on the Mount, and he was one of three who "beheld his glory" when Jesus appeared in the spotless garments, which were "white as the light."

John believed, as did the other apostles, that Jesus was the Messiah that had so long been promised to the Jews, but thought his kingdom was to be an earthly one. As his followers grew in numbers, they hoped he would one day proclaim himself their king, and become the ruler of the people.

John's mother was anxious, when this kingdom should be set up, that her two sons, James and John, who were now such close friends of Jesus, should be among the honored ones. So she came one day to Jesus with these sons, and worshipped him. Seeing that she wished to ask some favor, Jesus said to her, "What wouldest thou?" She said to him, "Command that these my two sons may sit, one on thy right hand, and one on thy left hand, in thy kingdom."

But Jesus, speaking to the sons as well as to their mother, answered, "Ye know not what ye ask." And then he said to them, "Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They say to him, "We are able."

The cup which Jesus meant was the death which he would die, and he said, "My cup indeed ye shall drink, but to sit on my right hand, and on my left hand, is not mine to give, but it is for them for whom it hath been prepared of my Father."

And then Jesus tried to teach them the true way of becoming great. He said, "Whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant; even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

John learned in time all about this kingdom of Jesus, and he wished no higher honor than to follow in his Master's steps, and do the works which he did.

It was John who leaned on Jesus' bosom as they were reclining on their couches at the Last Supper, and heard all the loving words which he spoke there. In the story which he gave of Jesus' life, he wrote all these sayings as he remembered them, and they are among the most precious words which are recorded as having been spoken by Jesus.

When the chief captain and the officers of the Jews seized Jesus on the night of his betrayal, all the disciples who were with him forsook him and fled, except Peter and John. Peter followed him afar off, but John seems to have kept as near as possible to his dear Master.

When Jesus was taken to the palace of Caiaphas, John, who was an acquaintance of the high priest, was allowed to enter the court,

where he could see all that was done there. He was present when Jesus was insulted and mocked, and when he was struck in the face by one of the officers. Perhaps in some way, if by a look only, John was able to show Jesus that he still loved and trusted in him.

When Jesus was taken to Calvary, John, with others of his dearest friends, followed the sad procession. And we are told that while Jesus was suffering there, his mother, with her sister and Mary Magdalene and others, was standing by the cross. John was there also, and as Jesus looked upon him standing so near her, he said to him, "Behold thy mother." And to his mother he said, "Woman, behold thy son." It was in this way that Jesus tenderly placed his mother in the care of the disciple whom he loved. John gladly received the trust given him, "and from that hour he took her unto his own home."

He was with Peter when the women came on that first Easter morning to bring the joyful tidings of Christ's resurrection. He outran Peter in his haste to reach the tomb, and see for himself that the Lord was risen indeed.

John was with the apostles who gathered in the upper room at Jerusalem, and he was one of the earnest workers who preached Jesus so

faithfully that a church of many thousands was soon formed in Jerusalem.

He was with Peter when the lame man was made whole at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, and as he lived in Jerusalem for many years, we may think of him as often performing miracles himself, and leading many in the Holy City to believe in Jesus.

John was not driven away from his work even by the persecution which raged in Jerusalem. When Saul of Tarsus was entering the house of every Christian there, he, with others of the apostles, remained and faced the danger.

In the persecution that was ordered by King Herod Agrippa, John met with a sad loss, for his brother James was among the killed.

We learn that after many years John went to live in Ephesus, and there, under the dreadful persecutions of the Christians, by the Roman emperor Domitian, tradition says he was taken to be punished, but was afterward banished to the island of Patmos. While there he saw many wonderful visions of the glory of heaven; and he wrote an account of them which we read in the last book of the Bible, which is called the Revelation of St. John. He writes to the churches in Asia of what he saw in these visions, and begins by saying, "I John, your

brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus, was on the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet saying, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it to the seven churches. And I turned to see the voice which spake with me. And having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle.

“And his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace; and his voice as the voice of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword. And his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

Write therefore the things which thou sawest and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter."

A special message seems to have been given John to each of the seven churches of Asia, that are spoken of, and then he goes on to tell of the wonderful things which he saw in his vision.

At one time he writes that he "saw a door opened in heaven, and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and one sitting upon the throne, and he that sat was to look upon like a jasper stone and a sardius: and there was a rainbow, round about the throne like an emerald to look upon. And round about the throne were four and twenty thrones. And upon the thrones I saw four and twenty elders sitting, arrayed in white garments; and on their heads crowns of gold."

And later John tells us that he heard a voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands: saying with a great voice, "Worthy is the Lamb to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

And afterward John writes: "I saw, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could

number, out of every nation, and of all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands; and they cry with a great voice, saying Salvation unto our God which sitteth on the throne and unto the Lamb.

“And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, These which are arrayed in the white robes, who are they, and whence came they? And I say unto him, My lord, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God; and they serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall spread his tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat: for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

And then John was permitted to hear the glorious music of heaven and the songs of the redeemed. He says, “I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of

many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah : for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth ! ”

And then John saw in his vision the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. The foundations of its walls were precious stones, and the twelve gates were twelve pearls ; the streets of the city were of pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

And John said : “ I saw no temple therein : for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof. And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it : for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb. ” “ And he showed me a pure river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the midst of the street thereof. And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits, yielding its fruit every month : and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

“ And there shall be no curse any more : and the throne of God and the Lamb shall be therein : and his servants shall do him service ; and they shall see his face ; and his name shall be in their foreheads.

“And there shall be night no more: and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light: and they shall reign forever and ever.”

This is indeed a wonderful revelation of the glories of heaven, and of the beautiful life of those who dwell there. And all this was seen by John when he was an exiled prisoner in Patmos.

On the accession of the Roman emperor Nerva, John, it is thought, returned to Ephesus, as the persecution was ended, and there was now no danger of his life. He lived to a great age, and to the last he was revered and loved by all. He was the only one of the twelve apostles who died a natural death; all the others became martyrs in the cause of their Master.

In the last years, John often gathered his friends about him, calling them his children. At one time he wrote, “Greater joy have I none than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.” He wanted them all to live in peace and harmony with one another, and he always spoke tenderly of God’s love to them. And so when he became too feeble to preach, this became almost his only message to his people, “Little children, love one another.”



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